THE

ADVENTURES

OF

RALPH REYBRIDGE:

CONTAINING

SKETCHES

OF

MODERN CHARACTERS, MANNERS, AND EDUCATION.

1867

BY

WILLIAM LINLEY, ESQ.

The ways of Heav'n are dark and intricate,
Puzzled with mazes, and perplex'd with errors,
Our understanding traces them in vain,
Lost and bewilder'd in the fruitless search,
Nor sees with how much art the windings run,
Nor where the regular confusion ends. ADDISON.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

CONTENTS.

10

CHAP. I.

A short chapter containing more logue, and more madness -

CHAP. II.

Omnia vincit amor;—nos et cedam amori - - -

CHAP. III.

Ralph subdued by Love, *is towed i port by* Friendship. *He writes his tutor; the Rector's answer. determines to travel* -

CONTENTS.

CHAP. IV.

stle and matter - 53

CHAP. V.

return to Salisbury.—Old friends h new faces - 75

CHAP. VI.

which, the best and most politic re- ark that can be made, is:—that it quires more serious attention in the rusal than any that have preceded in the whole history - 95

CHAP. VII.

"———— *Tremble thou wretch That hast within thee undivulged crimes Unwhipped of Justice"* 120

CHAP. VIII.

Narrative 133

CHAP. IX.

The narrative concluded, and the conversation which followed, in which a certain Stranger is brought upon the carpet, whose name and exploits the sagacious reader is yet to be made acquainted with - 146

CHAP. X.

The History goes back to Grosvenor-square. The Rector's mysterious friend pays him a second visit 158

CHAP. XI.

A " just cause and impediment."—*The clouds of mystery begin to separate* - - - 158

CHAP. XII.

The Memorial of Rushden - 181

CHAP. XIII.

Continuation of the Memorial 203

CHAP. XIV.

The Memorial concluded, and the commencement of our Hero's inauguration - - - 221

CHAP. XV.

Being the longest and the last ; and in which another interesting discovery *takes place, which it is devoutly to be hoped our sagacious readers will not have foreseen* - - 245

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

TO THE

FOURTH VOLUME.

———I dreamt a dream, last night.———

SHAKESPEAR.

As I sat pondering in my arm chair the other evening over the pages of this my last volume, planning an appropriate introduction thereto, and yielding to all those fearful apprehensions and forebodings which an author naturally feels as he approaches that dangerous precipice from which his bookseller launches him into the great ocean of publicity; I felt a sudden drowsiness steal over me, which I vainly endeavoured to shake off; my pen dropped from my hand, and I presently fell fast asleep.

Queen Mab, according to Shakespear, frequently presides over the dreams of * lovers, lawyers, soldiers, and churchmen; but our immortal bard says nothing of her visitations to *authors;* for though he himself was occasionally touched with her magic wand, and particularly on one occasion about † *Midsummer.*—Yet it does not follow that she sheds her influence indiscriminately; nor can it indeed be expected that after sporting round the temples "of Fancy's child," she should think of flying to such heavy heads as mine; yet caprice will sometimes pervert the judgment of fairies as well as of mortals; to prove which assertion I shall, without more ado, acquaint my curious reader that her whimsical majesty did deign to visit me even in my arm chair, nor could that waggish sprite, Robin Goodfellow him-

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* Vide Romeo and Juliet.

† Midsummer Night's Dream.

self, have played wilder pranks with my bewildered senses.

Methought I was sitting alone in my room, my taper burning dimly before me, and had lifted up my pen to put the finishing stroke to this my work, when the door was suddenly forced open, and in stalked a set of terrible looking spectres, each armed with some dreadful weapon of mutilation; amongst these I could clearly distinguish axes, hatchets, pikes and penknives, with the uses to which they were to be applied engraved on them as follows: *To chop and mangle the meaning.—To cut the digressions to pieces.—To crimp and disfigure the characters and story!* &c. &c. &c. These fearful apparitions presently surrounded me; and seizing, without remorse, my poor bantling, began, and continued for some time, their barbarities upon it, deaf to my cries and lamentations! when suddenly, from another door, issued a gleam

of light, in the midst of which I presently distinguished a very grave-looking personage, but yet with a countenance at once so mild and dignified, that I could not avoid feeling an assurance of his immediate protection. But what most amazed me was, that the manly gravity of his features, as I gazed upon them, suddenly softened into an expression of *feminine* sweetness, and displayed so beautiful a bloom, that I remained in doubt whether what I beheld was male or female, till, as the rays of light increased, I saw the following letters written in the blaze:—*The Public.*

On each side were stationed two very amiable female figures: One, with a pair of scales in her hand, I immediately knew to be *Justice:* the other (though she came armed with *a knife*) I presently guessed, by the placid smile on her face, to be *Candour;* especially when I beheld on the silver blade of her weapon the word *pruning*.

At the command of the *Public, Justice* came forward, and gathering up the scattered limbs, put them together again; but not without rejecting a great variety of excrescences that had no business to belong to them. The members thus collected she delivered over to *Candour,* who, taking from a fold of her white robe a little box of ointment, on which I read *balsam of excuse,* she began with this, and her *pruning* knife, to remedy some defects, and clip away others, as she saw occasion. A few only of these were received back by *Justice;* the rest were thrown to the demons. But these evil spirits, disappointed of the *whole* of their prey, were not contented with a part, and instantly fled growling away. Thick flames of fire accompanied their flight, in the smoke of which I could plainly discern several labels round their necks, on which were written, *Lampooners, Party-Scribblers, disappointed Authors,*

&c. and here and there *a wig* appeared through the gloom with the word *Critic* inscribed upon it; but as the *tie* was in the form of a *snake,* I was convinced it could not belong to the liberal college.

A delicious strain of harmony now succeeding, I turned suddenly round to prostrate myself before my benefactors; but unfortunately striking my shin against a leg of the table, the pain of the blow awoke me.

Gentle reader, for the introductory chapter I originally intended accept this dream; and let me hope, as you peruse the remainder of my pages, you will sometimes condescend to refer to it. Let me not see you rushing upon me with the blighters of the first offerings of Fancy—but following in the train of a liberal and candid public, who while it justly condemns to the pruning knife the upstart shoots, is ever delighted to cherish and bring to maturity the genuine blossoms.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

RALPH REYBRIDGE.

CHAP. I.

A short chapter containing more dialogue, and more madness.

THOUGH it is probable that Westmere had long observed our hero's passion for his destined bride, yet this circumstance alone would have remained beneath his notice, had he not at length discerned symptoms of reciprocation on the part of the lady, a discovery which he instantly made known to his father.—The earl had not entertained the most distant idea of such an event, either one way or the other; for besides that he

was fully convinced of the scrupulous integrity of our hero, and the high sense of delicacy, duty, and propriety which had always marked the character of his beautiful ward, he would have laughed at the inference from a card, or a tea-table as too preposterous, the peculiar circumstances of the parties considered, for a moment's serious investigation; but he was startled by it coming from his son; and although he fully acquitted Ralph of any deliberate scheme of villany, he knew from sad experience the seductive power of beauty, and that there are moments when the most watchful discretion cannot withstand its force. Another circumstance, too, which seemed to render Westmere's suspicions reasonable, and give him alarm was; the hesitation that it was pretty obvious, though the rector had never resumed the subject, the young adventurer had made in accepting the eligible establishment his lord-

ship had pointed out for him.—The consequence of these unpleasant suggestions was another conversation between the earl and Mr. Denham, in which Westmere was permitted to bear a part. At the close of it, the old rector was no longer at a loss how to act, and he resolved to quit Grosvenor-square on the third day, and take our hero with him.

The day on which this resolution was adopted, was lowering and gloomy, and the wind rising towards the evening, the earl would have excused himself from attending the Countess of E——'s ball, to which himself and family had been invited, had he not been prevented, by the young lord, who urged that independently of the happiness he had promised himself in dancing with his fair cousin, it would be a very good opportunity for the rector to sound once more the inclinations of his pupil on a

certain subject, and learn the real state of his heart.

Lord Ardendale acquiesced, and though the evening was rainy and tempestuous, ordered the carriage and attended his son and Louisa to the Countess of E——'s. Mr. Denham, as Lord Westmere had predicted, was no sooner left alone with Reybridge, than he resolved to bring the poor youth to a decision in regard to the rector of R—'s daughter. "This business, my dear boy," said he, after some previous discourse, "has again been the subject of a long and serious conversation, between the earl and me.—Lord Westmere was present at the time; and I am sorry to say the result makes it necessary for us to leave London immediately. Lord Ardendale did not absolutely impart his suspicions to me, but the hints he threw out could not be misunderstood. Alas! my child, it is in vain to hope we

can conceal the inward workings of the soul.—Some gesture or speech, however trivial, will betray them to those who carefully watch them, and Lord Westmere, though apparently keeping aloof, has been too accurate an observer, my Ralph, of your guileless heart.—It remains, therefore, that you should now decide, whether you can cheerfully embrace the earl's noble offer, or not. Recollect, however, that *I* have promised to befriend you—have adopted you; and, as the child of my adoption, am bound to protect, and if possible to make you happy.—In giving my concurrence to the union in question, I have no other object in view, and if you still feel a repugnance to it, you can but gratefully decline the offer. You shall not find my heart or my doors less open to receive you; on the contrary, I have chalked out a plan for your future establishment, independent of Lord Ardendale, still in-

clined as he may be to serve you; which, if I have rightly appreciated the employments and recreations most conducive to your tranquillity, you must approve. You shall return with me to P—n, and from thence I shall send you to the University, where you may take your degrees at leisure.—Whilst you remain there, it is my intention to allow you 200*l*. a year, a supply I can very easily spare you from my income, which, owing to my noble patron's liberality, amounts to more, by almost double that sum, including the rectory, than it is possible I shall ever spend. When you have taken your degree, as a master of arts, if you have no objection I still mean that you shall enter into holy orders, and I shall endeavour to procure for you the first living that may fall vacant.—At college, your own good sense will direct you to a proper choice of acquaintances, and I think I can rely upon the soundness of

your principles, aided by the experience you have so hardly earned, for your security against vicious temptations of any kind.—For the pain, my beloved child, that your present ill-fated passion may bring upon you, I recommend the best of all remedies—a steady and constant reliance on the Divine goodness; remembering that God chastises but in mercy, and still hath "tempered the wind to the shorn lamb!"

Reybridge had never before experienced livelier sensations of gratitude towards his paternal friend, than at the present moment. He forgot all his sorrows and disappointments, and only enjoyed the delightful contemplation of knowing that he possessed such a friend. Even when the fatal intimation was repeated that he must prepare to quit Grosvenor-square, and his adored Louisa, the next day but one, and quit them perhaps for ever!—he acquiesced without murmur or remonstrance, sa-

tisfied that with such a friend to support and sustain him, the wounds of love could not long rankle in his bosom. Alas! poor Ralph! this was but the momentary flattery of thy gratitude! The image of thy beautiful mistress was soon to return to thy deluded fancy, and the thoughts of renouncing her for ever, to strike with a poignancy unfelt before. The rector, indeed, had scarcely got to his chamber, for it was his custom to withdraw at an early hour, before the dream of resignation began to evaporate, and our poor youth was only roused from his miserable reflections by the violence of the storm, which had now risen to so great a height, that it seemed as if the elements were contending for superiority of power.—Our hero was in the library.—It was a spacious gloomy chamber. He had only one candle burning before him, and the fire was nearly extinguished.—There are seasons when the mind, overcharged

by grief or anxiety, will fly to any expedient for relief, and though poetry was probably as bad a one as Ralph could have pitched upon, yet being naturally of a romantic turn, and the tempest continuing to rage, he snatched up a pen and "gave sorrow words," in the following stanzas.

Welcome, fierce spirit of the angry skies!
  My griefs are suited to thy rushing gale,
Thy storm, that pours, when winter's mists arise,
  Its desolating blast along the vale!

For 'mid the leafy ruins of the grove,
  Whose verdure shrinks beneath the drifting snow,
May the pale victim of disastrous love,
  Behold the truest emblem of his woe.—

Slow thro' his heart the first soft impulse creeps;
  Sharper anxieties his bosom tear!
Till thro' each vein the whirlwind passion sweeps;
  And keen as is the frost, is *his* despair!

Oh! welcome, then, thy clouds, thy tempest drear!
Unseen, unheard, I hail their mingled gloom!
For me no more the spring's blithe morn shall cheer!
For me, the summer fields no longer bloom.—

Pour on, and midst the roar my soul shall give
A loose to sorrow and long cherish'd pain;
Shall tell for whom, thus wretched *I must* live,
Tho' lost, and doom'd for ever to complain:

Louisa, 'tis for thee.—For thee I dare
Thus to the thunder all my griefs impart,
The winds relentless shall my secret share,
Since Hope's mild breeze no longer soothes my heart!

Oh! had I never met thy softening gaze!
Found thee so fair, so delicate, and kind,
Had I not witness'd, in a thousand ways,
The thousand graces that adorn thy mind:

Had ne'er thy voice, attun'd to nature's lay,
Pour'd its wild measures on my enraptur'd ear;
Or stealing, in some mournful close, away,
Invok'd from sympathy the sudden tear!

Could I unmoved thy virtues have survey'd,
Each sweet attraction pass'd regardless by ;
Could caution's cold behest my heart have sway'd,
And stifled in its birth the rising sigh !

I then might have forgot the *wanderer's* doom,
Have borne without a struggle ev'ry pain ;
Have stolen contented to my humble tomb,
Nor listened e'en to pleasure's voice in vain !

But now, if aught my anguish can appease
'Twill surely mingle with my latest breath ;
'Twill hover o'er the pillow of disease
And faintly glimmer on the dart of death !

For *then*, at least, I'll freely own my sighs :
Then, from my breast shall burst the smo-
ther'd flame :
Nor wealth, nor power shall that last prayer
despise
Which breathes a blessing on Louisa's name !

Unseen, unheard:—(save by the pensive Muse,
That loves to linger o'er a lover's woes)
No eye profane shall e'er these lines peruse,
No daring tongue the sacred theme disclose.

---That it was Ralph's intention to pre-

vent the possibility of eyes and tongues, either sacred or profane, having any thing to say of his melancholy effusions cannot be doubted, as he had no sooner finished, than he threw them into the fire; but this wary element, unwilling to approach too near such inflammable materials, continued its operations in a different part of the grate, and suffered them to remain unmolested, except by a cloud of smoke ;—a fate, which my critical judges may very possibly think far too lenient :—be that as it may, it is certain that the author did not think it necessary to witness the destruction to which he had doomed them, and from which he retired precipitately to bed.

CHAP. II.

Omnia vincit amor ;—nos et cedamus amori.
VIRGIL.

There are times when love does not care a rush for the strongest resolutions of either sex.—So long, indeed, as the mind is supposed to linger in doubt as to a reciprocal affection, so long may virtuous principles render it invulnerable to the keenest attacks of the fell urchin, and a sense of honour will prevail over every temptation of opportunity.—But when the traitor, bent on destruction, calls in the aid of accident, there is no determining how far his machinations may prove successful.

The first object Ralph beheld on the following morning, as he entered the breakfast parlour, rather earlier than usual, was Miss Leybrook.

He started back with a mingled emotion of pleasure and surprise; for besides that Louisa scarcely ever made her appearance at meals before the earl was seated, our hero recollected the ball on the preceding evening, and that the exertion of dancing always fatigued her so much as to induce her to keep her chamber the following morning. A moment's reflection warned him, however, to fly from the danger that threatened him, and he was about to turn back, when he was detained by one of those speeches which he could no more have heard unmoved, than the sea could have resisted the tempest without being ruffled.

"Lord Ardendale, Mr. Reybridge," said the lovely girl, with blushes on her cheeks, and an hesitation in her manner which Ralph had never before noticed; "informed me last night that it was very probable you would shortly be married to the eldest Miss Durford, the old rector of R——'s daughter."—Poor

Reybridge lifted up his eyes first to the ceiling, then towards the beautiful speaker, and lastly to the fire—Miss Leybrook continued—" I do not know the lady, but I am told she is a most amiable young woman, and will doubtless make you happy—as happy I hope" —— (and here, in spite of every effort, a gentle sigh escaped her) " as you *deserve* to be."

" Heaven and earth!" exclaimed Ralph, totally unable to command his emotions—" does Miss Leybrook condescend to say that—Oh! madam, spare me the torment of reflecting on your goodness, I cannot bear it.—I know not what I say, pray forgive me. As to my marriage with Miss Durford, willingly as I would sacrifice my life to convince Lord Ardendale of my gratitude for his unexampled generosity, in proposing for me so enviable and honourable an establishment, fate has placed a barrier in the way of my accep-

tance thereof, which is insurmountable. In misery was I possibly born; the offspring of wretchedness, obscurity, and guilt! And in misery and obscurity it is probable that I shall die!" Louisa's agitation was now almost as great as our hero's; she sunk trembling and pale into a chair, nor had she time to recover herself before the earl entered the room. The confusion of our ill-starred lovers was too perceptible. "Hey-day!" exclaimed his lordship:—"what's all this? Miss Leybrook in disorder and agitation?" "My lord," replied Louisa, exerting all her spirits—"I believe I fatigued myself last night, and have had very little sleep. I will, if you please, return to my chamber." "Indeed, Miss Leybrook," rejoined the earl with some acrimony—"I think it is, at present, the fittest place for you." Our fair heroine withdrew without making any reply, whilst Ralph remained fixed to his chair unable to speak or move,

"*You*, too," resumed Lord Ardendale, darting a look of severity at our poor hero, "Mr. Reybridge, appear to have had very little sleep. Your tutor, Sir, has informed me that you have positively rejected the establishment I had provided for you. May I venture to request your reasons?" "My lord," replied Ralph, with that firmness which ever accompanies a consciousness of good intention, "any language I could command would but feebly express my gratitude to you:—my veneration for your noble character. I conceive myself bound to your lordship by the strongest obligations, and I call heaven to witness that I never will violate them by a deliberate act of dishonour, or one that may justly bring upon me your displeasure. After this solemn assertion, I hope your lordship will excuse me from being more explicit. A circumstance of peculiar delicacy not only prevents my acceptance of your bounty,

and the hand of Miss Durford, but will possibly prevent my ever marrying at all." The earl started. "In any other way, my lord, command me. Place me in any situation, however humble, in any employment, however laborious;—to me they will be alike unobjectionable, provided I can be useful therein, and give your lordship satisfaction." There now remained no doubt in the earl's mind as to the state of the poor youth's heart; but he was too generous, after the ingenuous promise Ralph had given, and on which he was convinced he could rely, to suffer any further suspicions or apprehensions to disturb him;—taking our hero, therefore, cordially by the hand—"I am satisfied," replied he,—"perfectly satisfied that you will act in conformity to what you have now declared; and, under that conviction, shall never resume the subject which has given you so much embarrassment. My anxiety for your future welfare and happiness is

not, however, less eager than it was before. I think I have often told you that you strongly resemble a branch of the Carringsfort family, the *only* branch indeed that ever did it honour, and from which sprung my ever to be lamented and adored wife. It is not impossible, though I grant improbable enough, that you may be distantly related to Colonel St. Aubyn,—but whether you are, or not, I love to cherish the supposition. However," continued his lordship with a sigh,—" let that pass. I understand it is Mr. Denham's intention to depart to-morrow-morning for P——n and to take you with him. It is an arrangement, my young friend, I shall not interfere with, as I am convinced it will be for your *good*. However, when you are settled at the University, whither I find you are immediately to go, it is my intention to make you an allowance of 200*l*. a year, in addition to what your kind tutor has determined set apart for

you, till we can procure for you a living at least as eligible as R—, and without that incumbrance which you so much dread." The generous earl then left the room, to give Ralph an opportunity of recovering his spirits, and did not appear again till the rest of the family were assembled to breakfast.

It must not be supposed that Lord Ardendale meant to bribe our hero by his intended bounty, or that he thought it necessary as a security for the promise Reybridge had voluntarily given; the youth was, nevertheless, averse from the acceptance of it, and resolved, the first opportunity that offered, respectfully to decline it. Love in th mean time, had finished his battery, and now prepared for his grand attack.

The music-room was considered as belonging exclusively to Miss Leybrook. In this apartment her own little library was arranged, and her drawings, her filigree work, of which she was particularly

fond, were deposited :—In short, it was only by express invitation that the earl himself ever entered this room during the morning, and, though it was lighted up in the evening, it was never considered as a sitting room except when the fair Louisa indulged the company with music: on which occasions Ralph had always made one in the concert. Now the devil, or love, for the malignancy might in the present case have been applicable to either power, so ordered it, that after breakfast the two lords, father and son, and the rector should retire to another conversation in the library, leaving our hero to fill up the vacancy of their absence how he could; and as Ralph was in no condition to combat with his own reflections, he resolved to take this opportunity of calling himself on his old acquaintance Mr. Horton, and ultimately upon Mr. Settlebright's executors for the purpose of ascertaining, if possible, whether

any document, however trifling, had been discovered among the banker's papers relative to the mysterious supply made on his account. He rose for this purpose, when he recollected that the evening before, and soon after the earl and Miss Leybrook had departed to the Countess of E——'s ball, he had visited the music room, and, music being the food of love, had indulged himself by touching some mournful chords on the piano-forte. Now, in this said music-room, he had carelessly left his hat, and as this hat was to be recovered either by himself or a servant, the devil or love, as we before observed, suggested to him that as Miss Leybrook had retired to her chamber unwell, there could be no impropriety in his going for it himself. He accordingly ascended the stairs that led to the room in question, and having previously tapped softly at the door, to prevent the possibility of an intrusion, he entered:—but

the state in which he saw every thing convinced him that Miss Leybrook had been there since she had quitted the parlour in the morning, for the piano-forte was open, and books and writing paper were lying on the table. The servants had removed his hat, and he was retreating, when, casting his eyes a second time on the music-stand belonging to the piano-forte—he beheld—conceive gentle and compassionate readers of both sexes, the emotions of his soul, the identical verses he had written the night before, and which he concluded had been burnt to ashes!—"Great God!" exclaimed he, staggering back as if a horrible phantom had crossed his sight—"How is this? Surely 'tis an illusion!" Snatching up the well known scroll, and traversing the room:—"No, by heaven," continued he, again examining it, "'tis the same. The fatal proof of madness and presumption that must for ever ruin me!" And now had

our imprudent youth committed it a second time to the flames, he had done well, and Cupid have opened upon him the remainder of his powerful battery in vain, but unfortunately he continued his examination of it so long and so minutely, that, though the whole was written on one side, he forgot that circumstance, and turned to the other, which presented to his astonished view in a different and fairer hand-writing, the following additional stanzas, which he had scarcely strength to peruse.

But know, dear youth, "tho' fated to complain,"
Thou didst not mourn "unseen;"—for love was nigh,
Bore on his wings thy melancholy strain
Number'd each tear, and treasur'd every sigh!

And while my trembling pen my hand obeys,
Thus let it paint *thee* generous, brave, and kind,
Tell, that "I've witness'd in a thousand ways"
"The thousand graces that adorn *thy* mind."

That, not "unmov'd" *thy* virtues I have seen,
While grateful mem'ry bade them brighter shine;
That though one fatal vow must intervene
To tear thee from my heart: that heart is *thine!*

This was a trial Ralph could not sustain. The only relief he had hoped to experience when for ever separated from the woman he adored, was in the assurance of her being finally made happy by a union with Lord Westmere: for he could not think it possible that any man could be insensible of her merits; and he had pictured to himself the satisfaction she would feel in completing the wishes of a guardian she so loved and honoured:—But to know that such an angel would be wretched; that she was even then sharing with him the anguish of hopeless love! Louisa Leybrook, eminently distinguished by every advantage of nature, education, wealth, and connexion!—and himself,

the wretched outcast of society, the unhappy cause !—The reflection was too aggravating: his fortitude sunk under it, and he dropt motionless into a chair !

He revived:—but it was to endure a still severer trial. Bending over him, with eyes beaming pity, love, and sorrow, he beheld Miss Leybrook herself. And here it will be necessary to explain how all these distressing circumstances had been brought about.

Our attentive readers will please to observe that Ralph's muse had, on the preceding evening, kept him up to a late hour, and that he had scarcely retired to his room when the earl, Westmere, and Louisa returned from the countess E—'s ball. The latter instead of retiring immediately to her chamber, repaired to the library to get the second volume of a work she was perusing, but was surprised to find the fire still burning. The servant who attended her

with candles then informed her that Mr. Reybridge had been there by himself for several hours, and had but just retired to his room. The insidious traitor of the bow that instant directing her eyes to the fire-place, she observed on the hearth, to which it had doubtless been blown by the wind, our hero's manuscript. It had been somewhat parched by the flames, but not so as to render any part of the composition illegible, and the name of Louisa in Ralph's hand-writing fixed her motionless to the spot. She had just presence of mind enough to bid the servant retire, and then, regardless of every prudential consideration, she read,—she wept;—she kissed the fatal scroll, and was undone! On the following morning love still reigned triumphant in her heart, over her reason, gratitude, and pride. Her interview with Ralph convinced her of the purity of his attachment; for he had given up an eligible establishment,

relinquished the possession of an accomplished and virtuous woman, that he might freely devote his thoughts, even in solitude, to her! Lord Ardendale's sudden interruption has already been described. Louisa retired, not immediately to her bed-chamber, but to her music-room. There, brooding over the melancholy effusions of her lover, she yielded to the dangerous sympathy that stole upon her heart, and composed the additional stanzas which our readers are already acquainted with.

That our fair heroine, having thus like our hero, given way to the irresistible impulse of love, should have left this treacherous paper again exposed to the eye of observation, can only be accounted for by those of my worthy readers of both sexes who have felt the tender passion. To them, therefore, I leave the exposition. However, she had not been in her bed chamber many minutes, before she recollected herself,

and flew back for it; but instead of the verses, she discovered their unfortunate author, pale, and apparently breathless in a chair!

An irresistible impulse carried her towards him, whilst she gazed on his pallid but expressive features. The next moment restored him to recollection: "just heaven!" cried he, starting up with a wildness in his manner, that made Louisa tremble,—" then the measure of my affliction is full! Yet I have not been a deliberate villain! Chance, chance alone has betrayed me! But, I must fly,—fly from the world. The friendly shelter of the grave is now my only refuge from despair!" Then dropping on his knees to his fair mistress, who had sunk into a chair overpowered by her own emotions, and grasping her hand—" dearest and most beloved of women," continued he—and forgetting in his phrensy that Louisa might still have been kept ignorant of his having

seen his verses again with *her* addition, "adieu! For ever buried in my bosom shall remain—" Miss Leybrook started from her chair, and clasping her hands together—"Oh! heavens!"—exclaimed she, falteringly,—"you have, then, Mr. Reybridge; you have, then, seen"—"Oh! madam!" interrupted he—"spare yourself, I beseech you, so humiliating a question! Think no more of a wretch who has dared to violate the laws of honor. Misery and disgrace must ever pursue him!" "Alas!" replied Louisa, wholly overcome by his desperation, "dear Reybridge, you have nothing to accuse yourself of, accident and only accident has undone us! Has revealed a *truth*," deep blushes overspread her pale face as the declaration was escaping her, and our hero, unable any longer to strive against the storm of passion that assailed him, caught her in his arms, and breathed on her lips a solemn vow of eternal constancy. "Oh! God!" exclaimed he,

"that now hearest and seest me, bear witness to my vow! Secluded from the world, from all earthly cares, from all other society save the treasured thought that keeps thy virtues, Louisa, in my remembrance, must I now endeavour to live. In some lone spot where safe from interruption I may call upon thy name, and invoke thee in my visionary slumbers." Louisa withdrew not from the arms that encircled her, and even suffered the distressed youth to kiss off the tears that fell in streams from her eyes. Recovering, however, from this dangerous indulgence, he suddenly called to mind his solemn promise to Lord Ardendale, and the guilt of the present breach rushed to his conscience with a force that overwhelmed, for the moment, every softer consideration. Could his fault be expiated? There was one way: misery was the consequence, but honour was the stern approver, and he did not hesitate: stifling, therefore, a convulsive

sigh he proceeded. "Oh! Miss Leybrook, I have been a wretch, a very wretch! Rashly have I violated a sacred promise to my noble benefactor, and 'tis only in your power to mitigate that anguish which the consciousness of so vile an offence will occasion. Lord Ardendale lives upon the hope of your becoming his daughter,—in that event he looks forward to the accomplishment of his proudest expectations. Endeavour therefore, ever dear and generous as you are, endeavour to forget that the obscure and unfortunate Reybridge ever had an interest in your heart; and remember only his presumption in having cherished a passion it was in every respect his duty to have suppressed. We must never meet again. Yet, it will be some mitigation, I feel it will, of my pain, to hear that you have completed the happiness of the earl by a union with his son!—And now, adieu! adieu for ever!" Louisa would have spoken,

but utterance was denied her. Again she found herself, incapable of resistance, encircled in her lover's arms, who strove in vain to tear himself from the fascination that bound him, till a loud knocking at the street door recalled him to reason and to agony! Springing like an arrow from her embrace, he rushed precipitately out of the room and into the street, where he ran on in a distracted manner, till his strength again forsook him, and he fell senseless upon the pavement.

CHAP. III.

Ralph subdued by Love, *is towed into port by* Friendship. *He writes to his Tutor, the Rector's answer. He determines to travel.*

It generally happens that where an author once begins to tyrannize over his unfortunate hero, there is no end to the tormenting liberties he gives his pen. I hope, however, it will hereafter appear that Ralph has not been punished out of mere wantonness; but that his misfortunes, like so many toads, will each be found "to have a precious jewel in its head." This can only be discovered, however, by our most attentive, as well as retentive readers; and if you, my worthy friend, there, who are trembling over my pages as if they were so many impediments, instead of necessary clews

to the unravelling of the mysteries you seem so anxious to arrive at, if you have not, now and then, reverted to the grand design of my work, and if you do not contrive to revert to it, for more is yet to come of wonderment than you perhaps dream of, you had better throw my book behind the fire, and take your ride in Hyde Park !

When Reybridge recovered from his second trance, it was not, as before, to fix his eyes on the beautiful countenance of his Louisa, but on the grisly faces, or rather phizzes, of two or three strange looking figures, who, like so many troubled spirits, were stalking round a rug bed on which he found himself very carefully placed. There is a certain crisis, it may rationally be presumed, in mental as well as bodily disease, from which the sufferer, if he can fairly get over it, will be restored progressively to his wonted tranquillity. Be this as it may ; Ralph certainly, on

coming to himself, found his spirits more composed; and, as if he thought it impossible for any human calamity to afflict him further, looked about him with perfect indifference as to the place where he was, and waited very calmly for matters to explain themselves. In the midst of his reverie, his ears were saluted by the following familiar strains. "Come, come, doctor, d——e bear a hand, we shall run, else, bump ashore, for want of knowing the trim of the vessel! Odd's heart, beest as slow as a Dutchman!" Our poor hero instantly recognized, and not without considerable satisfaction, the voice of his old friend *Neptune*, and springing eagerly up, hailed him by his name. Grappling obeyed the call, but seeing Ralph preparing to jump out of bed, he drew back with an—"Avast heaving there!---Here, clap on all hands, shipmates, and keep her to her moorings; she'll part her cable else, spite of all we

can do!---Come, doctor, d——n your eyes! Crowd all sail, and bring your bleeding tackle aboard!"—So saying, he rushed upon our youth and held him down by main force.

The fact was, that our honest seaman had entertained a very erroneous notion of his young friend's distemper, and had, indeed, given him credit for being in that situation of mind, which entitles his majesty's liege subjects to a snug birth in Moorfields. In company with two or three of his old messmates, he was passing by Lord Ardendale's door as Ralph rushed out, and observing in his friend's frantic haste every symptom of distraction, followed, with his companions, and had nearly overtaken him as the poor youth fell to the ground. The distortion of his countenance, and the confusion of his dress might have deceived wiser and profounder heads than Joe's and his comrades. They accordingly bore him, with great expe-

dition, to the first public house, till proper assistance could be summoned to his relief. The doctor had just arrived, as our hero opened his eyes, and the scene took place as we have before described.

It was some time before Reybridge could convince his friend that he was not mad; Grappling, however, was at length satisfied; but the doctor, who had been summoned three streets off, insisted on the contrary; and that a blister on the back of the head, the deprivation of a few ounces of blood, an emetic at night, and a cathartic in the morning, were absolutely necessary to bring things square.—"Believe me, Sir," said he, addressing Ralph, "you are too young to judge of your own constitution. I observe a filmy concretion across your right eye that sufficiently demonstrates an internal distemperature of the brain. There are, Sir, three things, in those cases, that are absolutely and unques-

tionably determinable in *our* favour, imprimo," "D——n your imprimos," interrupted Joe, who was now satisfied of Ralph's sanity. "None of your slang, doctor, none of your pestle and mortar palaver here, or I'll have you to the gang-way, d'ye see, and give you such a *blister*, as shall keep all your patients alive for a week to come at least! The worthy disciple of Galen was rather confounded by this address; but Ralph slipping a couple of guineas into his hand, soon reconciled matters. "I am obliged to you, Sir;" said he, "for your concern for me, and make no doubt, were I in the predicament you suppose me, but that your prescriptions would work their intended good. Assure yourself, however, that whatever may be my other ailments, I am under no apprehension of losing my reason." "D'ye hear that, doctor?" continued Joe. "Come, come, pocket your shiners, brother, and sheer off."

The doctor was not slow in obeying this word of command, and after many profound bows to our hero, took his departure with somewhat more satisfaction than he made his entrée.

The meeting of Ralph and the old tar was cordial on both sides. Our hero had not, however, so far recovered from the shock of his late separation, but that his features still wore the expression of the deepest affliction. Grappling, who now recollected the circumstance of Miss Leybrook's rescue, shook his head, and after some preliminary hums and ha's. "Aye, aye," observed he, "I do see which way the wind sets. What, young madam and you ha' parted company, hey?---Well, I don't enquire into particulars:---only a tighter rigged vessel from stern to stem I never seed, d'ye see. I had hoped you'd a had her in tow for life, Mr. Reybridge, but foul weather will take us aback, sometimes. There was my Sall---thof she did bring

her clappertacks aboard sometimes, she was staunch to me, poor soul, and lov'd her little uns! And I could ha' bin contented, d'ye see, to ha' *gone down* wi' her, but when the *great One* aloft bids us strike our colours, what signifies palavering?" Here Joe's eye pumps began to work, and he was fain to recruit his spirits with a fresh quid.---Reybridge, notwithstanding his own griefs, could not help sympathizing with honest Grappling on the death of his wife. "But your children, Joe;" enquired he—"how have you managed for them?" "Why, Sir;" replied Joe, not quite so fair a-head as I could wish it. I have sent my boy to sea in a merchantman:—the best place for un:—for to tell'e the truth, Mr. Reybridge, he's a chip of the old block, and when he was a younker he was never so happy as when I took un aboard wi' me, and let un stand by me whilst I was singing out at the wheel, hauling forward a bowling,

or spunging a gun. As for my two girls—they be at present with their aunt at Plymouth, who consented, d'ye see, to board 'em for ten pounds a year, —but owing to the peace, and our ship being paid off, I don't know how I shall manage wi 'em in future, not I.—I've nothing for't but shipping my old carcase off to sea again."—"That must not be, my good friend;" interrupted our hero. "I now sincerely regret we ever parted, and if you have no objection will, to use your own style, weather the future gales of life together. My misfortunes, however, spring not from pecuniary distresses. I have an idea of making the tour of England and Ireland, will you accompany me, my friend?" Grappling shook his head, for he saw all was not right in the mind of his young benefactor,---"Come, come;" continued our hero, "you can make no objection, as you have no longer the enemies of your

country to deal with." "I objections to go with you, Mr. Reybridge!"—replied Joe rather reproachfully. "D—e I should as soon think of objecting to stand to my gun:---thof I be a crazy old hulk to clap a hauser on it must be confessed. I've seed the day howsomever, in which I could have been serviceable." "To me, you will be so now, honest Grappling;" replied Ralph, with a sigh! "I love the blunt sincerity of your manners; and there will be moments in which your conversation, uncouth as it is, will soothe the depression of my heart." Neptune had again recourse to his tobacco-box, and Reybridge continued. "Since we parted, I've met with the dearest friend I have in the world. You must take a letter to him from me. He is already acquainted with your merits." "As to my merits, Mr. Reybridge, and all that," replied Joe, "why I boasts no more than my neighbours: but the lubber

that would not lend a hand to give you a lift, my sweet young commander, deserves to be keel-haul'd round the fleet." So saying, he took our hero affectionately by the hand, and swore never to leave him while a stick remained standing above water. Preliminaries being thus adjusted, Ralph summoned the master of the public house, whom he rewarded liberally for his attention,and also tossed a guinea to Joe's comrades to drink his health. They then adjourned to F——'s hotel in Oxford street, where Reybridge immediately bespoke apartments for himself and Grappling. He then called for pen, ink, and paper, and gave a succinct account to Mr. Denham of all that had unfortunately transpired, between himself and the fair Louisa, in consequence of his poetical effusions, and that he had left the house in a state of mind little short of distraction. He concluded in the following words. "By this, my re-

vered friend will, I trust, admit, that though his unhappy pupil has been guilty of the greatest weakness and imprudence, he has not been deliberately criminal. It is my intention to leave London very early to morrow-morning, to give you the meeting at P——n, for I cannot suppose any thing will happen to delay your journey. The earl will doubtless be surprised at the abruptness of my departure, but you, dearest Sir, who know so well how to manage matters of this delicate nature, will easily satisfy his lordship that my heart is not the less fervently grateful, but—I dare not trust my pen further; I leave it to your wisdom and discretion. I have much to say to you on the subject of my future wishes, but my mind is at present too much agitated to dwell upon any topic. Dear Sir, will it be proper for you to come to me here?—I doubt not. The bearer is the honest seaman of my history to whose gallantry I am

so much indebted. Since the war it has gone rather hard with him, and on that account, I hope you will not be offended that I have taken him into my service and confidence. Of his worth and integrity there can be no doubt, and I sincerely believe him to be as strongly attached to your poor Ralph, as man can be to man."

Grappling being dispatched with the letter, our hero called for the newspapers of the day, with which he endeavoured to divert his thoughts from wandering to the point of all his sorrows, but in vain; and he was throwing them one by one hastily away, when the following paragraph caught and rivetted his attention. "Yesterday the sessions began at the Old Bailey when George Timmings, *alias* Gullum, *alias* Gentleman Tim, was capitally convicted of forging an endorsement on a promissory note with an intention to defraud Sir Charles Clinton, Bart. This unhappy

man had received an excellent education, possessed great talents, and was the natural child of Lord ———."

Ralph's blood ran cold as he perused this paragraph and such was the pure benevolence of his heart, that he could not avoid shedding tears of compassion for the untimely and miserable fate even of the wretch that had undone him. "Oh! Heaven!" exclaimed he—"If the talents of this poor man had been fostered in the lap of virtue, if his unfeeling father had checked him in the first career of vice, instead of shamefully abandoning him, and if what was squandered in luxury and dissipation, had been appropriated to the acquirement of a creditable establishment for him, this dreadful catastrophe might have been prevented!—But alas!"

The return of Grappling, who had now been absent near two hours, put an end to these melancholy but just reflections. Hastily snatching a letter which Joe held

out to him, the old seaman broke out in the following exclamation,—" Odd's flesh!—If it hadn't bin, d'ye see, for the cursed zig-zag navigation to this here square, I should a bin back afore now—but shiver me if I could keep on the right course two minutes together!—First on one tack then on t'other. Howsomever I got into port at last, and now do hope I have brought good intelligence."---Ralph having eagerly broken the seal, read as follows:

" My dear boy,

" Your letter has relieved me from the most dismal apprehensions on your account. My servant George was passing up stairs, when you rushed so suddenly out of the house, and fearing some accident had happened, he entered the room you had quitted. Miss Leybrook had sunk into a chair, but on George's approach, she rushed precipitately by him to her bed-chamber, to which my

prudent old servant instantly dispatched her maid. Be not, however, alarmed. The earl knows nothing of the matter, neither does lord Westmere, and Louisa is now composed.—No, my poor Ralph; of imprudence I cannot altogether acquit you, but certainly I do of intentional wrong. You will now, my dear boy, see the absolute necessity, on my part, of hastening, by my best advice, a *union* which if it be to take place, ought, for all our sakes, to be no longer delayed.—When it becomes criminal in you to favour the indulgence of your unhappy passion, such I know is the rectitude of your principles, the sooner you will be able to subdue it altogether, as your exertions will be strengthened by a consciousness of their necessity.—I know of nothing that can prevent my departure to morrow morning for P—n. I shall make your excuses to lord Ardendale in the best way I can; but am of opinion, all matters considered, it

would not be so well for me to see you at the hotel. I expect to embrace you at P—n to morrow night. The earl must think you already there.

"The agitation of your mind will be best appeased by reflecting on the comparatively greater miseries of thousands of your poor fellow creatures." Ralph thought of the wretched Gullum, and felt the truth of the observation.—"Whatever your future wishes may be, I know they will be innocent, and therefore, laudable; consider them therefore as already complied with by your affectionate and paternal friend.

"CHARLES DENHAM."

Grosvenor-Square,
August 11th, 17—.

"P.S. I gave your worthy seaman my hearty congratulations on his preferment, which I entirely approve."

Our hero felt considerably soothed by

this affectionate letter, and though his heart now underwent another terrible shock in the certainty of having lost Louisa for ever, yet he firmly resolved to fight boldly with his attachment, though he should perish in the attempt.—Despair fled from him, and honour triumphed without a rival.

"Well, Joe;" observed he after a pause—"How do you like my father?" "Hey?"—replied the tar. "Belay all that!—Is that there reverend old gentleman your father, Mr. Reybridge?—Why I do think as how he be, indeed; for he be all kindness and goodness like yourself, d'ye see,—and there be summut alike in the cut of your gibs." "I assure you, Grappling," rejoined our youth—"he has ever been to me the best of friends and fathers; but I am only his adopted not his begotten son." —"Aye, aye," returned Neptune significantly, and taking a fresh quid from his tobacco box.—"I do understand.—

Well, well; the best helmsman may sometimes veer a point or so from the right course. The compass be'ant always faithful, we must allow for the variation, d'ye see." "Prithee, Joe," replied Reybridge, who nevertheless fully comprehended his old shipmate's allusion, —"do learn to speak to be understood. This mariner's eloquence will never do when the trowsers are thrown aside."— "It be hard for an old seaman to forget his phrasology," replied Grappling, "Howsomever I shall be able, in a few glasses more, to pick up your landsmen's lingo, and whenever I find my tongue drifting to leeward of your honor's understanding, why I'll haul up, d'ye see."—Ralph smiled at honest Grappling's simplicity, and having dismissed him to procure a wardrobe better calculated for his new employ, he sat down to arrange his meditated tour.

CHAP. IV.

Bustle and matter.

OUR hero's conscience had often smote him for having so long neglected to enquire after the Sefton family and their concerns. Regarding the fortunes of Lieutenant Fitzallan, too, he was no less anxious; and his debt to the honest inn-keeper at Salisbury still remained unpaid. All these considerations coming in contact, determined him to pay in the first instance, a visit to the widow and her children, according to the directions he should receive from the administrators, to whom it was his intention immediately to apply; secondly, to settle with the worthy Tom Tappum on his return, and then

embark for Dublin to search further for his old friend the Lieutenant.

Resolutely bent to conquer, if possible, the fatal passion that still preyed upon his heart, he felt that nothing would so greatly forward this desirable end as a clash of different interests and occupations constantly employing his thoughts. The life of solitude he had originally meditated, virtue now depicted as the error of a sickly imagination; a weakness it would be dishonourable to indulge, whilst his life could be actively and usefully employed. No, he would, as the immortal Shakespeare has it;— "rouse himself"

———————That the weak wanton Cupid
Might from his neck unloose his amorous folds,
And, like a dew-drop from the lion's mane,
Be shook to air.

It was rather late in the evening before Joe appeared in his new clothes,

which he said he had purchased cheap in Monmouth-Street, but so ridiculously aukward did they hang upon him, that Ralph, oppressed as his heart was, could not help laughing:—upon which Grappling surveying himself in a large glass that was in the room; "aye, aye;" cried he—"I do see how it is. What the rigging baint taught enough, mayhap?—Why, so I did think; but the lubbers at the stall told me 'twas the fashion now-a-days to go under easy sail." To this our hero observed that they had indeed given him credit for more corporation than met the eye, but that in the morning he should be accommodated with an old suit of his own, till a proper livery could be made for him. To this arrangement Grappling nodded his satisfaction, and then retired to an ale-house, where he had appointed some of his old messmates to meet him, to drink success and returning happiness to his dear young master.

Ralph having taken an early supper, and ordered a post chaise to be ready by four in the morning, was waiting honest Joe's return, that he might retire to his bed-room, when a waiter entered and delivered to him another letter from his tutor. Surprised, and somewhat agitated, he hastily opened it, and read as follows:—

"My dear Ralph,

"It is with the deepest concern I inform you that my noble friend lord Ardendale was, two hours ago, seized with the gout in his stomach; and although his physicians have at length pronounced him out of immediate danger, yet I read in their countenances very serious apprehensions for his life. In this awful situation I cannot think of quitting him, and, as it is quite uncertain what may be the result of the attack, I desire you will lose no time in repairing to P——n. My servants are

prepared for your reception. However, if you have any other plan in your head, pursue it, by all means. I enclose you notes for 200*l.* use them at your discretion, and fail not to write to me wherever you are. I am too much agitated to say more at present. Heaven bless you!

"CHARLES DENHAM."

Grosvenor-Square,
nine o'clock.

Though the death of lord Ardendale would have left the still adored Louisa more at liberty to indulge her own inclinations, yet Ralph's soul was too generous and too grateful to admit such a suggestion. He thought only of the noble kindness of his benefactor, and having counter-ordered the chaise, and desired not to be disturbed that night, even by the faithful Grappling, he retired to his chamber, overcome by the accumulation of anguish, that, maugre

all his philosophy, pressed upon his heart with a weight that seemed to bid defiance to the returning consolation of his friendship, and even of religion. Even Louisa was this night forgotten, and the image of the dying earl,—his considerate and condescending benefactor, was perpetually before his eyes.

The following morning relieved him from this terrible anxiety. Another short note from his tutor, who had anticipated the consequences of the first communication, informed him that the gout had at last been entirely driven from the earl's stomach, and that though he was still suffering from it in the feet, that all danger was over. Observations, whenever they are founded on truth, can never be too frequently recalled to the remembrance, a very common one of this kind, is—that happiness and misery are but comparative terms. It is certain that each sensation springs from the other, and, as it would be dif-

ficult to make the miner, who never sees the light of the sun, but still cheerfully eats his mouldy crust during a slight respite from toil, feel sensible of any worldly oppression or calamity, so would it be equally difficult to make the favourite of fortune with almost every gratification at command, alive to any additional happiness. Reybridge had conceived himself completely wretched in the loss of Louisa. Yet the dreadful apprehension of lord Ardendale's death had made him still more so. His tutor's second letter came and filled his heart with the most lively joy and satisfaction, and yet only one weight had been taken from the scale of unhappiness; in the one opposite nothing had been placed. Our hero now determined to postpone his journey to P——n, and to lose no time in finding out and introducing himself to the mother of his late beloved friend, and the sister of Major Penrose.

He accordingly wrote to his tutor a letter explanatory of his intentions, and, accompanied by the trusty Joe, directed his course towards the city, and the house of Messrs. Greenlips, Grubber, and Co. the worthy bankers from whom he had received while at Salisbury the information of old Mr. Sefton's death and misfortunes. On re-entering the office, he endeavoured to make the necessary enquiries of one of the clerks, but his voice was utterly lost in the hubbub and confusion of other tongues, and the young man to whom he applied, not exactly understanding the purport of his business, instantly left him to attend to another solicitor with whom he was better acquainted. After several unsuccessful efforts, he turned to Grappling, who was chewing his quid in a corner, and having communicated to him his distress—"why, truly," replied Joe, "I can't say but how they do make as much noise here as thof the

ship was going down, but howsomever, it shall go hard if I dont make um answer our hail, one way or another!" So saying he applied his fingers to his lips and made the house ring again with the shrillness of his whistle. Thunderstruck by this phenomenon, the difference of exchange underwent a complete dilapidation, and a sudden mortifying silence ensued. During this fortunate interval, Ralph was given to understand that Mr. Grubber was the partner of the firm to whom the affairs of the late Mr. Sefton had been entrusted, but that he was at present laid up with the gout. Notwithstanding this circumstance, our hero having ascertained the place of his abode, which was in Old Broad-Street, immediately repaired thither, and arrived, just as Mrs. Grubber was waddling towards an elegant chariot that stood ready at the door to receive her. "Odd's heart," quoth Joe with a jerk of his new breeches, "she'll never

lay astern for want o' sail howsomever!—but smite me if her old timbers will be able to bear such a press, long." It was fortunate for Grappling, that this sprig, or rather *branch* of city fashion was not altogether aware of this facetious remark: she, however, glanced a look of very severe inquiry upon Reybridge, and then flouncing into the carriage was driven away in triumph! As our hero's appearance was very prepossessing, he had little difficulty in gaining admission to Mr. Grubber, whom he found with both feet wrapped up in flannels, and in conversation with a decent elderly looking woman, who was standing before him, and in whose countenance the deepest concern was very forcibly impressed. "Servant, Sir, Servant;" cried the banker, addressing our hero with great self-consequence—"pray be seated."—Then turning again to the poor woman—"and so, Mrs. what d'ye call um, you see how it is.

Impossible that the house can do any thing further for you." "I should have hoped, Sir;" replied the poor lady, "that my late unfortunate husband's long connexion with it, and the confidence and support—:"—"Pho, pho," interrupted Grubber, "what signifies the support of an extravagant man!—and as for his confidence. Where was the great merit of confiding in a firm that can command half a million sterling? In short, madam, it would give me much satisfaction to accommodate you, but justice, to which I have hitherto, I thank God! most scrupulously adhered, prevents me: since, if I grant favours of this kind to *one*, I must grant them to all." "A noble instance of just dealing, truly," cried Ralph!—Then turning to the poor suppliant, and handing her a chair—"do me the favor, madam, to acquaint me with the cause of your present distress, and if it should be in my power to relieve it, it will afford me the

greatest happiness to do so." "I am gratefully sensible of your generosity, Sir," replied the lady, the tears starting from her eyes;—"but, though spurned, as you see, by this man of money, I am not yet so dreadfully reduced as to require the casual charity of strangers; and yet will I, in future, rather beg from door to door, or starve in a prison, than stoop to another application to him." —So saying, and before Reybridge could renew his offers, she withdrew. Ralph, however, hastily summoning the faithful Grappling, ordered him to follow the lady to her house, and to be particular not to forget it, and the way thereto; for his active benevolence was not to be repulsed by a little mistaken delicacy. Joe promising to be careful on the look out, our youth returned to Grubber, and without further ceremony, desired to know where he might find the widow and children of the late Mr. Sefton. The man of money putting on

his spectacles at this interrogation, and looking earnestly at our hero, demanded, in his turn, whether he was the gentleman who had sent the packet and letter from Salisbury? "The same, Sir." replied Ralph, indignantly. "And you must allow me to observe that the cold and unfeeling answer I received in consequence, has, by your conduct this day, been sufficiently accounted for." "And you must allow *me* to observe, Sir," replied Grubber, "that your conduct to a man in his own house, throwing out such insinuations, and all that is n't the thing. Why *that* woman was Mrs. Sefton whom you just now saw; but" —"That lady Mrs. Sefton?" exclaimed our hero, starting from his chair—"Good God, is it possible!" "Young man," rejoined the banker—"you seem to be very little acquainted with the policy of the world."— "Enough," answered Reybridge, losing

all temper, "to see how low it can degrade the richest and most luxurious of those who live in it, when it blinds them to the duties of common humanity! Oh! what a disgrace to the community, when men such as you, devoted to selfishness and dead alike to individual distress or the public good, are suffered to usurp the dignified character of a British banker, and to boast of commanding millions!"---Sir! Sir!" retorted Grubber, twisting off his spectacles, I find you are as little acquainted with good manners, as with the world; and Sir,"—"I am glad, however," interrupted our hero, "that the truth stings home, and so, good Mr. Money Trader, I leave you to the further reproofs of your friends, conscience, and the gout, two companions, Sir, I take it, rather less lenient in their attacks than your obedient humble servant."—So saying, he left the house without

waiting for a reply, and stationed himself near the door in anxious expectation of honest Joe's return.

The old tar did not keep him long in suspense as to his re-appearance, but he opened the particulars of his commission in such a strain of land and sea gabble mixed together, that our hero lost all patience. "There is no bearing this, Grappling!" exclaimed he.—"Either speak less unintelligibly, or you must positively be sent to school again to learn English:—or else you must find an interpreter; one or the other." "Odd's life!" replied Joe. "Why I be sure I spoke as good English as ever was broached, but you fine gentlemen of education, d'ye see, won't make allowances for us *literate* chaps, and expects as how we can manage our lingo, as handily as we do our guns. Howsomever, Sir, I've been long at sea, and am more used to hard blows than hard words."

Ralph was too anxious to introduce himself to Mrs. Sefton, to argue the point further, and only desired his old servant to conduct him without more ado to the house to which he had traced her. Accordingly, after walking a considerable way, and through a variety of courts and winding passages, he observed to his guide that he was apprehensive he had mistaken the way. "No, no, Sir,"—replied Joe, rather reproachfully. "Thof I can't talk, d'ye see, I can steer. The navigation be rather ticklish to be sure, but if I don't bring you safe in, my name baint Joe Grappling." At length, the old seaman stopped at a little mean looking house in an obscure court on Cornhill. "Why, surely, exclaimed Reybridge surprised, "the lady cannot live here?" "Why that be more than I can fathom," replied Joe. "But here she cast anchor, and at anchor you'll find her now, mayhap, unless she have slipped her cable since."

Our hero accordingly knocked at the door, and enquired of a little dirty girl that answered the summons, if he could see Mrs. Sefton for a few minutes." "I doesn't know, indeed, Sir;" replied the girl—"but I'll go and ax mother." "Heavens!" exclaimed Ralph. "If the benevolent Major Penrose could have an idea of the reduced condition of his beloved sister, how would it wound his noble heart! But it must be my duty to rescue her from so deplorable a situation."

A vulgar-looking woman now made her appearance, to whom Reybridge having repeated his enquiries;—"Sefton be her name," replied she—"be it? Well, I never know'd her name afore. Yes, Sir, she be at home, and if you'll please to walk up you'll find her:—and I hope, as you seems to be a friend, she'll now be able to pay for her lodging, for I've a bin kept out o'my money long enough of all conscience."—Ex-

tremely shocked by this intimation, Ralph, having desired Grappling to wait below, followed the servant up stairs. "Who's there?" cried a weak voice, as the servant opened the door;—"Why, Missis;" replied the wench, abruptly entering. "Here be a gentleman that axes to speak with you." And then without waiting for any reply, she threw the door wide open, and Ralph had nothing left for it but to enter the room, which he did, however, in the most humble and respectful manner. Mrs. Sefton had just time to rise from an old bed on which she had been reposing, whilst two very pretty girls were reading to her. In their countenances Ralph observed a very strong resemblance of his deceased friend, and the recollection of past events in the east banished, for the moment, every other remembrance, and filled his eyes with tears. "I am to apologize to you, Madam," said he—"for this intrusion;

but I come, not now as a stranger, but a *friend.*" "Good God!" exclaimed Mrs. Sefton regarding him with emotion—' Surely I cannot be deceived in you? Doubtless you are, you must be the amiable young man to whom my beloved child was so much attached? The youth whom my brother,"—Here the tears interrupted the good lady's speech, and Reybridge drawing a chair and respectfully taking herhand,—"Yes, dear madam;" replied he—" My name is Reybridge; but let me entreat you to compose yourself. Believe me nothing should have prevented my immediately following my packet, which I was reluctantly compelled to forward to the unfeeling man you have had to deal with, but a succession of unlooked-for events: my visit to Grubber to day was purposely to enquire the place of your abode: judge, then, of my surprise and indignation when I found it was Mrs. Sefton whom he had so inhumanly

treated in my presence. But I cannot speak of the wretch with common patience!—Let me entreat you, therefore, dearest madam, to throw aside all restraint, and relate to me, as to your never to be forgotten son, the particulars of your present difficulties, and instruct me how, most pleasing to yourself, I may release you therefrom."—The poor widow was overcome by this benevolent address. She lifted up her hands, and as tears started to her eyes.—" No, my dear brother !" exclaimed she, " you have not overrated the virtues of this young man ! Providence surely has sent him now to save me and mine from destruction !" Our hero was inexpressibly shocked at this speech, but before he could reply, Mrs. Sefton continued. " No: generous, tender, and considerate as you are; amiable friend of my beloved boy, I will no longer suffer a false pride to conceal from you the real distress to which I am reduced." The

good lady then proceeded to inform our hero, that, since the death of her husband, who from having been seduced into speculations in the alley did not leave wherewithal to satisfy one half of his creditors, she and her children had almost entirely subsisted by the charitable contributions of a few friends; but that these friends were now almost wholly dispersed, and that only the last exigency had compelled her to apply to Mr. Grubber, whose miserly and unfeeling character had long been known to her. "You saw," concluded Mrs. Sefton, "the result of my application, Mr. Reybridge, which, though supported by the strongest letters from Major Penrose, failed to move his flinty heart."

"Name the villain no more, dear madam!" exclaimed Ralph, whose indignation was not to be controlled; at the same time taking from his pocket one of the notes of 100*l.* which had been sent him by his tutor.—"Here is a

trifle which I hope will answer present difficulties. In the evening I will do myself the pleasure of calling again, when I hope I shall have found out fitter lodgings for the sister of Major Penrose, and the mother of my dear lamented Tom!"—So saying the put the note into his hand, and whilst Mrs. Septon continued to gaze upon him with an expression of unutterable gratitude, hastily quitted the room.

CHAP. V.

The return to Salisbury.—Old friends with new faces.

On Ralph's return to his hotel he found another letter from Mr. Denham enclosing an additional note of 100*l.* "which," observed his venerable friend, "make no hesitation in accepting, for on second thoughts, I would not have you go yet to P——n, but set out on the little tour I know you have in contemplation. The widow of your juvenile and unfortunate friend Sefton, you will have no difficulty in finding; but that you have neither heard of, or from your older friend Lieutenant Fitz-allen or any of his family, surprizes me much, and indeed, my dear boy, makes me suspect that that worthy man is no

longer living. I mention my surmises as it is right you should be prepared for the worst accounts you may, at length, receive concerning him. The earl continues so poorly that I shall not think of leaving him. As he is, however, informed of your departure, I would not have you delay your journey a day longer. You can write to me from the different places where you halt, and should any more money be wanting, you will of course let me know."

Reybridge had no sooner read this letter than he resolved to commence his tour the next morning early. His plan was to visit Salisbury in the first place, and pay his debt to honest Tom Tappum; from thence to strike off to Wales by Bath and Bristol, and so on to Ireland. Having communicated his intentions to Grappling, and ordered him to pack up all his things, he swallowed a hasty dinner, and again sallied forth to procure

proper lodgings for Mrs. Sefton and her children. A very decent second floor in Tavistock-street, Covent Garden, caught his attention, he accordingly engaged it at two guineas a week, and having seen every thing provided for the reception of the family that evening, he returned to the city, and brought the mother and daughters away in a hackney-coach.

It were needless to dwell upon the grateful behaviour of Mrs. Sefton on this trying occasion, suffice it to say, that our hero having secured from her a promise that she would, on no account, refuse his pecuniary assistance till she should hear from Major Penrose, to whom the accounts of Mr. Sefton's death and insolvency had immediately been written, returned to his hotel, and on the following morning, notwithstanding the fatigue of mind and body he had experienced the preceding day,

departed with Grappling in a post chaise for Salisbury.

It was certainly fortunate for Reybridge that there existed these little interests in his breast to stimulate him to action, for however great and praiseworthy was his resolution to conquer his hopeless passion, yet reflection would hardly have been supportable to him, without them. On the arrival of our travellers at the White Hart inn, honest Tom Tappum, who happened at the time to be standing at the door, came forward himself to conduct our hero to a room. Reybridge recognized his old friend and creditor, but the recognition was not mutual; and indeed, no wonder; for our sagacious readers need not be told that the finest complexions and the soundest constitutions are soon undermined by the corroding influence of anxiety and disappointment. Ralph, indeed, once seen, was not easily to be

forgotten, but it must be remembered that our worthy host of the White Hart could form little judgment of him, but by externals, and these had suffered a change *in toto*. His eyes were no longer sparkling, his cheeks no longer rosy and plump; his fine hair, which had before hung in ringlets over his shoulders, was now powdered, and his dress, though it had always been genteel, was more fashionable. Grappling, who was well aware of the cause of this journey, jumped out of the chaise the moment the door was opened, and taking honest Boniface by the hand, made him roar again with the warmth of his salutation.—"Art as hearty a cock, friend," cried Joe, "d'ye see, as ever stepped on dry land, and you and I must splice the main brace together, if I never touch a can of flip again!"—Whilst honest Tappum stood staring in silent astonishment at the tar, whom he began to suspect for a madman, Ralph re-

quested he might be shown to a room, and begged that the landlord would give his attendance. Mine host very chearfully obeyed this mandate, and having shut the door requested to know what his honor would like to have for dinner?

"Pray, my friend,"—replied Reybridge, evading the question,—"do you find your business here tolerably profitable?"—"Why, Sir," replied Tappum, "so, so. I have not, of late years, to be sure, been able to bring so much grist to my mill as formerly; but taxes be high, provision dear, and then the war; but howsomever, I contrive to budge on pretty much of a muchness with my neighbours, and so I don't grumble, not I!" "Well," replied Ralph "that's fairly confessed, however, but have you never any bad debts on your hands, landlord?"—"Why, Sir;" answered mine host, "for the matter o'that, now and then I a bin a

little weak-headed or so, but not often. And now I be completely *up* to them kind of tricks." "And you really, then;" continued, Ralph, "have no recollection at present of any money being due to you from a quarter whence you have little expectation of recovering it?" "Why no, Sir," replied Tappum, regarding our hero with some surprise, I can't say I have. "Yet, hey! hold—odd's fish now I remember:—but I don't call that a bad debt:—there's something here," putting his hand to his heart, "that tells me 'tis a good un; thof I should never see my money again. The case was this, Sir, a very fine looking lad—but I beg your honour's pardon,—what would you please to have for dinner!—I've a delicate loin of veal, Sir, on the spit, and fish and fowl of all kinds!" "I wish," interrupted our hero, "I could speak so well of your memory, landlord, as, I have no doubt I shall, by and by be able, of your

larder. And so you have quite forgotten me, my friend Tappum, hey?"—"Bless my soul!" returned honest Tom, now regarding our hero with more particular attention, "Gad's my life can it possibly be? Why yes, sure; now I look again, I be pretty certain you be the very young gentleman who was robbed here some weeks agone?" "The very same, my worthy host," replied Ralph—"returned, like an honest man to pay my debts." So saying, he slipped a bank note of 50*l.* into Tappum's hand without further ceremony, telling him that if there should be any usury in the case, the blame must, for once in a way, fall on the borrower, and not the lender. Then pushing him out of the room, in spite of all the good landlord's bows, blessings, exclamations and excuses, he summoned his servant, and after ordering him to consult with the good man about dinner, which he desired might be ready pre-

cisely at four, he snatched up his hat, and took a walk towards the magnificent cathedral of this famous city.

On turning the corner of a narrow street, he perceived, approaching him, a tall emaciated young man very shabbily dressed, in whom, notwithstanding a lapse of so many months and the total alteration of his appearance, he immediately recognised his old messmate Vapourley. In the colours of prosperity Ralph might have regarded him in silent contempt, but a much kinder sensation knocked at his heart as he witnessed the evident dejection that sat on every feature of the present object of his scrutiny. Vapourley continued moving mournfully along, and, either not seeing, or not wishing to see our hero, was passing him; when Ralph taking him by the hand, exclaimed with a soft and compassionate voice,—"What, have you forgotten me, Mr. Vapourley?" "I confess, Sir," replied the

other slowly lifting his hollow eyes from the ground—" you have the advantage :"—but recollecting himself he added—"unless you should be, and indeed I believe I am not mistaken, Mr. Reybridge." " The same, Mr. Vapourley;" rejoined our youth, " and though you and I were not, when last we parted, on the very best terms, yet believe me I am sincerely anxious to forget all misunderstandings.—Indeed you look very unwell." " Ah! Mr. Reybridge"—replied the other—" I have ruined myself." Then, vainly endeavouring to conceal his emotions—" but I will not trouble you with my grievances, and *your* pity, sir, I have least deserved." Reybridge was affected by this exordium. " Pardon me, my friend," replied he with increasing kindness; "I have long since, believe me, buried in oblivion our former disputes, and shall be most happy now to be of the smallest service to you." " You were always gene-

rous;" added Vapourley, the tears standing in his eyes; "but I am so situated at present, that I fear your noble kindness will do me little good." The poor youth then, at Ralph's earnest request, went on as follows:—"When we parted at Madras, I had prospects in view, which a steady conduct would by this time have crowned with lucrative as well as honourable success, but you, Mr. Reybridge, need not be told of my extravagant propensities, and the shameful imbecility of my mind. In a few months I found myself deeply involved in debt, yet I continued my career of dissipation, notwithstanding the cautions and admotions of a true friend, which I not only slighted, but ungratefully resented, though he had both the power and inclination to serve me. Still my good genius did not desert me. My father, whose interest with the directors was very great, procured me so strong a recommendation to the governor, that,

notwithstanding my dissipated conduct, I was appointed to a very eligible station to the northward. Equally ignorant of business, as incapable of application, I had not been long in this situation, before I found myself implicated with my superior in office in a charge brought against him for having appropriated to his own use, the public money. In vain I urged in my defence, that I had signed papers, of the purport of which I was wholly ignorant, and that though I had participated in certain emoluments, I had been told they were fair advantages :—Government could make no allowances for *intention*, it could only notice facts. I was consequently suspended the service, ordered home, and finally dismissed. My father's rage I tremble at the bare recollection of. He would not see me after my disgrace, but sending me a bank note of 200*l*. commanded me to shift, in future, for myself, how I could. I was

shortly after obliged to quit London, and the only relation to whom, in this dreadful extremity, I could apply, was a maternal uncle, an apothecary in this town. He, though naturally a crabbed man, was not proof to the bitterness of my distress, and took me to his house; but I soon found he was in no condition to afford me any material assistance. He wrote, indeed, to my father, but without effect; and had begun to plan something in his own mind for my future subsistence, when a putrid fever, caught in visiting a patient, cut this only friend off, in three days!—as my poor uncle's affairs, at his death, were by no means in a prosperous state, I had little to expect from his administrators; and indeed my destitute condition, during the arrangement of his concerns, never once entered into their heads. I now wrote again to my inflexible parent, but in vain, and being obliged to quit my uncle's house"——here the poor youth could

go no further:—a gush of bitter tears interrupted his speech, and he would have passed on, but Reybridge, in whose breast compassion was never more strongly excited, prevented him. In the most soothing and respectful terms he assured the unhappy young man of his eager desire to serve him, and insisted upon his accompanying him back to the White Hart to dinner. Vapourley could not speak, but he silently followed our hero with his hands clasped, and at his arrival at the inn fainted away!—Ralph, shocked by symptoms which convinced him nature had long been without her usual nourishment, rang the bell violently, and Grappling entering, they proceeded to recover the poor sufferer. Joe instantly knew him, notwithstanding the miserable alteration in his whole appearance, but our worthy tar was not the man to triumph over distress, but was as handy, as his young master, in restoring his shipmate to his senses.

When he came to himself he acknowledged that for the last five days he had been reduced to extremities, and had owed his subsistence to some few remaining friends of his deceased uncle; that the office of a beggar, had, however, become so irksome to him, that he had gloomily resolved to put a period to his miserable existence!—"You, Mr. Reybridge," continued he, "most generous and benevolent of men, are the only person from whom I have, God knows how undeservedly! received the kind offerings of real charity. From you they have come as consolations to my heart, and I am resolved to profit by their influence." "And well resolved, too;" exclaimed Ralph. "I will endeavour in the mean time to rescue you from your present desolate condition, and, if possible—your father, you say, has great influence at the India house; —the directors have, therefore, no doubt, some with him. Do you think the

earl of Ardendale's interference would be of any service to you? I know he has a great deal to say at the Board of control!"—"The earl of Ardendale's interference!" exclaimed Vapourley starting up, and seizing our hero's hand!—"Oh God!—Yes.—Every thing. Do you know lord Ardendale?"—The recollection of the earl's serious illness now occurred to Ralph, and checked the sanguine reply he would otherwise have made to this question. He only therefore assured his poor friend, that he could not answer for the success of the application it was his intention to make to that nobleman, as he was, at that time, lying extremely ill at his house in Grosvenor-square, but that if he would be the bearer of two letters from him, one to his lordship, and one to the Reverend Mr. Denham, who was residing with him, something fortunate might be the result.—Vapourley eagerly undertook this joyful commission, and

our hero, retiring to his own room prepared the letters accordingly, and delivering them with a smile to his old shipmate, together with a ten pound note.—" I am obliged," said he, " to leave England for a little time, but I trust and hope *one* of these letters will, at least, be of service to you; in the mean time, till happier prospects appear, you will not refuse this small assistance from an old messmate; and I would advise you to set off for London this very evening by the coach that stops at this inn." Vapourley, as his trembling fingers received these valuable presents, gazed on the amiable donor some moments without attempting to speak; at length, catching his hand, he carried it devoutly to his lips. Honest Tappum at this moment entered the room with the dinner, and as he was not a stranger to poor Vapourley's distress, murmured, as a tear started in his eye. —" Aye, aye, Master Vapourley, you've

a got the right sow by the ear this bout, howsomever."

After dinner, it was settled that Vapourley should write an account of his reception at Grosvenor-square, directing his letter to the post-office at Bath, whither our hero purposed immediately to proceed. "And my friend," said he—"as the coach will soon be here, lose no time in packing up the few things you may wish to take with you." Vapourley accordingly withdrew to his own lodgings, and having furnished himself with a few necessaries, and changed his ten pound note into small notes and cash, returned to the White Hart just as the London coach arrived. Nothing now, therefore, remained, but to bid adieu to his benefactor!—"Oh! Mr. Reybridge!" said he, grasping Ralph's hand—"you have taught me what it is to venerate virtue. To regard with an awful sensation of gratitude, I never was capable of feeling before, *that religion*

which teaches us to recollect former injuries, only to return them by benefits!—Be assured, my dear benefactor, the bright example you have set shall not be lost upon me. I will endeavour to forget what I was, and henceforth pursue the path of industry and honour." So saying, he sprung into the coach, and was presently out of sight.

Thus did our hero beguile the wretchedness of his heart. Neither to the frenzy of passion, nor the torpor of despair did *he* abandon himself; nor, though possessed of the means, did he seek to bury his reflections amid scenes of riot and debauchery: still mindful of the lessons of his beloved tutor, he determined to extract comfort even from his calamities, and though feelingly sensible of his own forlorn condition, was still grateful to his Maker for appointing him the instrument of his merciful dispensations to others.

The next morning early, our two tra-

vellers pursued their journey to the gay city of Bath in one of our worthy landlord's best vehicles, drawn by a pair of his best horses.—Tom Tappum opened the chaise-door for his young benefactor, invoking a blessing on his head, which, though coming from the landlord of an inn, who has generally his "God bless your honours!" cut and dry for every scoundrel that can spend a guinea, was, we will venture to believe, very faithfully recorded in the register of benedictions *above!*

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

CHAP. VI.

On which, the best and most politic remark that can be made, is:—that it requires more serious attention in the perusal, than any that have preceded it in the whole history.

On the third day of our hero's arrival at Bath, he received the following letter from Mr. Vapourley.

"TO RALPH REYBRIDGE, ESQ.

"I lose no time, my generous friend, in acquainting you that your benevolent exertions have been attended with success beyond my most sanguine expectations. Oh, Mr. Reybridge!—you have

restored to life, to honour, to happiness!—To what is dearer to life itself, to the forgiveness of a father!—I did not see lord Ardendale when I called in Grosvenor-square, but Mr. Denham received me with the greatest kindness, and assured me that the earl, ill as he was, had paid immediate attention to your letter. So, indeed, I found it;—and could scarcely credit my senses, when, in less than two hours after, I received a message from my father desiring me to repair immediately to Bishopsgate-street. I cannot describe to you the sensations of my heart, when I found myself in the presence of my offended parent, but all apprehensions vanished before the reception he gave me. "Ned," said he—"I shall no longer resent your former faulty conduct, since it must have been from a very different behaviour that you were able to secure such an advocate as the earl of Ardendale. I am willing consequent-

ly to believe you are sufficiently sensible of your former errors, and though I could, without much difficulty, get you restored to the Company's service, yet I think I have something as eligible in my eye for you, at home.'

" He afterwards told me that in a few days he could procure for me a situaation under government that, with common prudence, would in a few years make me independent for life. Thus, then, is my character retrieved: and happiness and respectability placed once more within my reach,—all, all owing to *you*!—Oh! my friend! my pen would feebly express my feelings on this occasion. My future conduct must evince my gratitude, and a better world than this reward your unexampled benevolence!

" On my return to Grosvenor-square after this blessed reconciliation, with an intention of thanking my noble intercessor, I was grieved to understand that he

was still too ill to be seen ; Mr. Denham, however, with the smile of an angel, congratulated me on my good fortune, and endeavoured to enter on the subject of my future establishment, but matters of greater importance I plainly perceived engrossed all his thoughts, and, indeed, after two or three fruitless efforts to begin a conversation with me, he confessed that something had very lately occurred of a domestic nature, which was still agitating his spirits, and that he must write *to you* about it, immediately. Upon this, without saying another word I respectfully pressed his hand and departed. When his lorship is in a better state of health it is my intention to call again, and will inform you of the result of my visit, till when, believe me, most benevolent of friends,

"Your grateful and ever obedient,

"EDWARD VAPOURLEY."

London.
August 20th, 17—.

Though Ralph was abundantly gratified by the success of his exertions in favour of his old shipmate, and affected by the grateful expressions in which it was related to him, yet he felt a considerable degree of alarm at the concluding paragraph of the letter. "Something had happened to agitate Mr. Denham's spirits!"—This something was to have been imparted to him! "*immediately*" imparted!—yet no tidings had arrived. Various therefore were our hero's conjectures on this head. Sometimes he flattered himself that Valpine had discovered, at length, the names of his parents!—Now he imagined that Louisa had refused the hand of lord Westmere!—In short so oppressed was he with this new anxiety, that Grappling, as he attended him to his chamber in the evening, could not avoid remarking his disturbance, and observed with very genuine expressions of concern, that "if the helm must be quitted

in despair, why then it must; but that for his part, he could affirm that a true seaman never deserted his station, be what it might, while one plank would stick to another!"

The next day Joe was dispatched to the post-office, but returned, as before, empty handed, and Reybridge was compelled to endure another day's torturing suspense. The following morning, however, brought him so large a packet from his venerable tutor, that, though it did not seem possible for adversity to afflict him further, he could not break it open without fear and trembling. With a palpitating heart he perused the following extraordinary communication.

"TO MR. RALPH REYBRIDGE.

"My dear Boy,

Though longing to write to you, I have not been able, till this moment, to

take up my pen. I have been more agitated than I have words to express, by events equally extraordinary as unexpected. And now to explain them.

"On the morning of your departure from London, lord Ardendale was much better, and the physicians began to hope all danger was over, but, in the evening, the spasms returned, and his situation became more alarming than ever. Somewhat relieved by the medicines prescribed for him, he sent for his son and Miss Leybrook to his bed-side, and, in my presence, thus addressed them. 'My dear children, I doubt the hand of death is upon me!—I think I feel his fatal influence!' Then, taking Miss Leybrook's hand.—'Louisa, I have but one wish to live;—need I name it? To see you united to Westmere. To know, ere I die, that the future honour of my family will be intrusted to your keeping, will give a tranquillity to my last moments which I shall, otherwise,

vainly hope to experience. Can you, then, my lovely ward, will you generously consent to wave a longer trial of his merits, and deign to accept him?—' 'Oh, my Louisa!'—interrupted Westmere, breaking, for the first time since her prohibition, into the passionate language of a lover—'I swear!' 'There is no occasion,' cried, I checking him, 'for all this impetuosity. That tender and mutual confidence should subsist between persons willing to devote to each other their temporal happiness, does not require the restriction of an oath, and protestations, on such an occasion, the more vehement they are, the more they betray a consciousness of irresolution.' Then, turning to earl, I continued, 'I have not, my respected benefactor, been inattentive lately to your wishes on this head:—Miss Leybrook has honoured me with two or three audiences on the subject, and I think I may venture to hope, that the present appeal, at a crisis so solemn and so affecting,

will remove every remaining scruple.'— I am afraid, my dear Ralph, to dwell on the scene which followed. I know the susceptibility of your heart, and would not, more than is necessary, probe the wound it has received. I, therefore, hasten to inform you, that, after some hesitation, Miss Leybrook consented to be lady Westmere, at the expiration of a week, stipulating, however, to have that interval to herself, that she might reconcile her mind to the event, and bestow her hand with a composed and cheerful confidence on the man, which both honor and gratitude seemed to have marked out for her acceptance.

"So complete was the satisfaction of the earl, so soothing was the consolation occasioned by this generous consent, on the part of this sweet girl, to his heart, that it produced almost an instantaneous effect upon his constitution, and Dr. G—— calling soon after, pronounced the most flattering prognostication of

his recovery. The general conduct of lord Westmere for some time past, had certainly been not only unexceptionable but praise-worthy. Regular in his studies, sparing his amusements, modest and unassuming in his deportment and conversation, he seemed to have entered upon a new view of things, and although the change of conduct, thus supported, was easily to be accounted for, yet it had been a proof, at least, that not only his heart but his mind had been touched by the superior beauty and virtues of his lovely cousin, and that he thought the possession of such a treasure worthy the sacrifice of his dissipated pleasures. And yet, Ralph, greatly I fear this young man has been a dissembler. Still am I painfully apprehensive that the gloomy and turbulent propensities of his nature have only been pent up, to burst forth with greater fury, when no longer restrained by the dread of losing the woman he loves; and greatly do I doubt that even

the possession of such an angel will not long withhold him from mixing again with his licentious and extravagant companions. Gracious heaven!—If this should be the case!—But the wedding has not yet taken place; perhaps it *never* may! Yes, Ralph; perhaps never. Let me hasten to unfold circumstances that will amaze you!

"The day after Miss Leybrook's consent was obtained, lord Ardendale was so much better as to be declared out of danger. He had just arisen, for the first time since his attack, from his bed, when your friend arrived with your letter to him. No application could more seasonably have been made, or come from a quarter more certain of success. The earl, though too unwell to see Mr. Vapourley himself, dispatched me to give him the kindest reception possible, and in the mean time, wrote to the old gentleman, his father, in such a manner, as to secure his forgiveness of

his son. The particulars you have, of course, heard from the young man himself. Your conduct in this affair, my dear child, requires no comment from me. In a heart less open to benevolence I should have been inclined to pay the tribute of my praise, but I rejoice in the assurance that my Ralph requires not the constant stimulus of approbation to incite him to actions of goodness.

"Not long after young Vapourley's departure from Grosvenor-square to attend his father's summons, lord Westmere entered the room where I was sitting, with looks more disordered than I had ever before seen them!— I eagerly demanded if any thing had happened? Was the earl worse?—' No no:' cried he, vainly endeavouring to conceal his perturbation—' but—pray, Mr. Denham, have you seen any thing of—of—Valpine?' I started. ' Valpine! my Lord?' I echoed with amazement,—has he then been here? ' I know not;'

replied he—' but I am now convinced that he is the villain you always thought him.'—'Indeed! my lord!' I returned quickly—why so?'—I observed that this question staggered him; endeavouring however to recover himself, he replied:—but it was by an evasion of my question,—' I have reason to believe that this man, this Valpine, of whom I had once the highest opinion, has been brooding over the indignities received in this house, and I know not what may be the consequence!'—' The consequence, my lord?'—repeated I in amazement!—' and of what possible signification can any consequences resulting from the malice of a wretch like Valpine, be to any of us?'—' I am free however,' answered he sullenly, ' to think differently.' ' Certainly, you are, lord Westmere;' returned I—' but allow me to say, that concealment of your reasons from your former tutor, and, in a case of such peculiar delicacy, is neither

just, nor becoming. You are yet very young, and I will admit that a villain so experienced as Valpine *may* greatly have deceived you, but, for that very reason——' here he broke in upon my speech with an impetuosity that grieved and astonished, as much as it displeased me!—' I cannot, Sir, cried he, 'reveal my reasons at present, let that suffice.' Then walking to the window in an agitated manner, he turned his eyes first one way and then another, as if expecting yet dreading to fix them on the object of his apprehensions.—' Lord Westmere,' I then, rather sternly observed; ' this extraordinary behaviour must be cleared up before we meet again on our former terms:—before I consent to unite you to the best of women. This disorder must have a cause, and the cause must be known. No capricious uneasiness shall, if I have power to prevent it, rankle in the breast of the man who accompanies the guileless Louisa to the altar!

Young man, young man, beware how you thus trifle with your own happiness; with the life of the best and most indulgent of fathers!' I then left him in a state of mind which confirmed my worst apprehensions ;—for I could no otherwise account for his fears from Valpine, nor can I now, than by imputing them to the consciousness of this man's possessing a knowledge of some licentious amour which, by revealing, would place an insurmountable bar to his marriage with Miss Leybrook. To have imparted my suspicions to the earl, would, in his precarious state of health, have been madness; but it was necessary the union should be delayed, and I had retired to my own chamber to think on some expedient for delaying it without alarming this kind, but too partial father, when my meditations were interrupted by a gentle tap at my chamber-door, which was, on my answering the summons, slowly opened by an elderly gen-

tleman in a military dress, but whose features I had never seen before. His whole appearance was emaciated, but his face, though very pale and thin, had great expression in it. You will not wonder that I immediately thought of your old lieutenant, and I even now very strongly suspect that it must have been Mr. Fitz-allan whom I saw. But to proceed. I was on the point of rising at his approach, but he stepped forward to prevent me; then drawing a chair he seated himself by me; and whilst admiration at the singularity of this self-introduction kept me silent, thus addressed me. 'Mr. Denham, it is now near three years since a fever of the most dreadful nature deprived me of the use of my senses.'—I shuddered at this preface;—yet I could not interrupt him, and he proceeded. 'The causes of my malady will hereafter be explained. It has, at length, pleased the Almighty to restore to me my reason, that his just decrees might

be fulfilled:—that the presumptuous may no longer arraign the wisdom and the mercy of his dispensations, and that the faithful may learn to reap fresh comfort under their temporary calamities. Good man,' resumed he after a pause, and surveying me attentively.—'Could not thy venerable looks, thy sacred character, thy mild and dignified virtues shield thee from abuse?'—Here a sudden flash of indignation lighted up the features of this singular stranger, but they almost as immediately resumed their former pallid complexion, and another pause succeeded. For me,—I sat as if spell-bound in my chair without attempting to utter a syllable. It was apparent to me, that whatever wonders my extraordinary visitor might have to communicate, his mind was not quite so settled as he seemed to imagine it. As he now sat, with his eyes fixed on the ground, as if waiting for some encouragement from me to proceed, I felt my

self bound to say something, and mustering up my resolution. 'I cannot, Sir,' I replied—'but give credit, from your appearance, to the truth of your assertion; and I shall pay the strictest attention to what you may be pleased to unfold. If I mistake not, Sir, your name'—'that,' replied he quickly, 'must not, at present be known. Darkness must shroud it, that deeds of darkness may be brought to light. I have, Mr. Denham, presumed to intrude upon your privacy that I may learn, from your own mouth, whether the noble owner of this mansion has positively fixed a day for the celebration of his son's marriage with the amiable Miss Leybrook?'—'The day is fixed, Sir;' replied I—'but I am not so sure.' 'Let me intreat you, reverend Sir, interrupted the stranger—'not to prevent the celebration.'—'How, Sir?' I returned with increased astonishment.—He continued. 'Forgive me Mr. Denham,

for wearing to you an appearance of mystery. My heart labours to open itself to you, but my story is too long, too eventful, too trying to my already too much shattered nerves, to be revealed more than once—Oh, Sir! I have *that* to relate which will admit of no pause. My declarations are of a nature which will require immediate consolation, and I must be better prepared to make them, than I am now.' 'And when then,' replied I, 'may I expect—' 'Not you, alone,' interrupted he with the same quickness, but lord Ardendale and his friends must hear me. The nuptials of his son are to be privately celebrated; I must be present at the ceremony, and then, and then only, will I unfold a tale'—' But why, Sir, this mystery?—can it be necessary?'—returned I—' Absolutely,' replied he. 'Believe me Mr. Denham,' and he laid his hand upon his heart with a solemnity that was convincing. 'It is necessary to the great end of justice. When can villany be better exposed,

than in the midst of conscious security? and the monster I will bring to light, knows not that such a man as myself ever had existence!—Yet am I the *only person* to call him to a retribution. And now, Mr. Denham, one question more, and I will not further trouble you. Where can I find the young gentleman, your amiable pupil—Ralph Reybridge?'—'Does your mysterious story' cried I, much agitated, 'extend to him?'—'Does it?' replied he, lifting up his eyes to heaven with an emotion that chilled my blood'—'Oh gracious God!'—then, suddenly recollecting himself,—'But where is he, dear Sir?—can I not see him?'—'I can send for him;' replied I, but he shall attend you at F—n's hotel in Oxford-street, 'enough,' replied he—I will fix my quarters there,' then affectionately pressing my hand.—'Excuse me, reverend Sir; I fear I may have wandered a little, but I will come *to the point* at last, doubt it

not. In the mean time, do not, I conjure you, however you may feel inclined, make any opposition to the union of lord Westmere and Miss Leybrook.'—And thus he left me. "After such a conversation, Ralph, will you wonder that, anxious as I was to write to you, I found myself incapable? Yesterday I had devoted to you, but more wonders occurred, and I was again prevented by various agitating conjectures.

"On entering lord Ardendale's dressing room, he told me he was so much better, that he had procured the sanction of his physician to sit up to dinner. 'But where is my son?' continued he, 'where is Westmere?' His lordship was not at home. The earl looked surprised;—I said nothing, but I shuddered to reflect on the dreadful consequences of any sudden and unexpected mortification to him, and which the extraordinary conduct of the youth the day before, gave me just reason to ap-

prehend. I was almost, indeed, convinced that something had happened, or was about to happen to him, which might debase him in the sight of his fair mistress. Whilst revolving these circumstances in my mind, Miss Leybrook entered the room.—She saluted her guardian with the greatest affection, whilst he tenderly embracing her cried —'Oh! Louisa!—to you, under Providence am I indebted for my life.' 'Indeed, my lord, replied she, if I could suppose it possible.' 'It is possible;—It is true;' returned he,—' say, then, you do not repent the promise you have given.' A servant at this instant entered the room and told me, in a whisper, that a *gentleman* wished to speak to me below. I concluded that it was the stranger returned, and fearing the earl might make enquiries, I might not be prepared to answer, glided out of the room. 'It is *Mr. Valpine,* Sir;' 'continued the servant lowering his voice as

he shut the chamber-door,—'and I did not like to mention his name before my lord.'—'You did right, John,' replied I, more terrified than ever at the thoughts of what this wretch might have to disclose.—Determined nevertheless to know the worst at once, I retired to my own room, and told John to show him up. Prepared as I was to meet again a man whom, of all others, my soul revolted at, I could not, as he staggered into the room, behold his dreadfully emaciated countenance, on which was now too faithfully depicted the lines of grief and remorse, without pity. He sunk into a chair, and then, after several efforts to speak, faintly articulated,—'I thought I could have related what I have got to say to you, Sir, to day; but I feel I must defer it. What time may I have half an hour's conversation with you, to morrow?' The poor wretch was evidently ill. 'At any time to morrow,'

replied I in a softer tone than he expected I believe—I shall be ready to hear what Mr. Valpine may have to say. 'I thank you Sir,' rejoined he, rising—'At twelve, then, if you please, I will wait upon you.' He then, without speaking another word, left the room, and I, without suffering any further anxieties to obtrude upon this letter to you, sat down immediately to write it. You will spare my comments. I have no nerves to make them; on paper at least. You will see the necessity of coming to London, but, as I anticipate the effect of my communications upon your mind, I insist upon it that you do not attempt to set out till the day after their receipt. You may then travel post, if you like. You will, of course, drive to *the hotel* in Oxford-street, and I will, if nothing particular prevents me, meet you there. Your mysterious friend, whoever he may be, must introduce himself.

"Adieu! Of your birth, my dear child, I doubt not some wonderful and happy discovery is at length about to be made; but I tremble for lord Westmere!—I tremble for my noble and benevolent friend the earl! God's will be done!

"CHARLES DENHAM."

Grosvenor-square, Friday,
August 22d, 17—

CHAP. VII.

" ———————Tremble thou wretch,
" That hast within thee undivulged crimes
" Unwhipped of Justice."

Shakspeare.

Our hero's career through life had been attended with so many surprises of one kind or another, that he was not so violently affected by what he had read as to render his immediate departure to town an experiment of any danger to his health; so greatly, however, did he hold in reverence the slightest charge from his beloved tutor, that he determined scrupulously to obey his orders of remaining at Bath till the next morning. His mind, in the mean time, had an ample and perplexing field for ruminations equally pleasing and painful. He was convinced that

some change was about to take place in his own fortunes for the better, yet he felt with his venerable friend, the most distressing apprehensions for the peace, and even the life of lord Ardendale.

Valpine's apparent penitence so immediately following the mysterious stranger's appearance, made it obvious that this stranger, whoever he was, had had communication with him, and power, either to terrify or soothe him to confession. That the discoveries, whatever they might be, in some measure regarded him, was equally clear;—yet what connection could they possibly have with any criminal conduct of lord Westmere's?—And by what means had the stranger, if indeed it was lieutenant Fitzallen, who was alike a stranger to all parties concerned, become the possessor of information of so much importance to all parties?

Our readers of retentive memory are here requested to recollect, and our

readers of a flightier description* to refer to certain expressions of *dreadful import* that were made use of by our hero's first and tenderest of friends, Mrs. Reybridge, when on the point of making a full discovery of everything concerning him, to Mr. Denham, she was interrupted by the unwelcome intrusion of Valpine. These awful words Ralph had never forgotten; for, whilst they convinced him that his beloved benefactress could not have been his mother, and were also strongly presumptive of Mr. Mapleton's not being his father, they clearly implied that he had, when an infant, been rescued from some impending danger. They now rushed upon his mind with more than common force, and he conceived it not only possible, but highly probable, that the mysterious stranger himself might be the *author of his being*.

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* 8th Chapter, 1st Vol.

But, however powerfully his thoughts were agitated by this suggestion, the tumult was weak in comparison with that which the tyrant love again kindled in his breast!—Adverting to the possibility of lord Westmere's failure, though his generous and grateful nature recoiled at the idea of the earl's dreadful disappointment in consequence, he could not entirely exclude the returning hope that fluttered for admission at his heart. The mystery of his birth unfolded, might he not prove the son of virtuous and distinguished parents? And, Westmere at length rejected, might he not, though poor, address Louisa with honour? Rendered almost frantic by a thought so flattering, dashed though it was with regret,—he continued to pace his chamber in so vehement a manner, that honest Grappling, who had delivered Mr. Denham's letter, and fearing it might contain some unwelcome news was waiting

below, now verily thought that his master was meditating some means of self-destruction, and darting up stairs, he rushed without any ceremony into his chamber, and thus accosted him. —"Avast! avast!—I thought Mr. Reybridge, as how you was too steady to strike to that lowering lubber, despair, d'ye see!—Thof I might have brought bad news,—what then?—Must we let the vessel go down without using every means to save her?—Remember, Sir,—the *Great One* aloft have gi'd you the command of her, and you be in duty bound to keep her afloat as long as you can, thof old Davy himself was to try to sink her!"—"And prithee Joe," replied Ralph—"How comes it about that you have made all these notable discoveries?" "Why, for the matter o'that," replied Neptune—I do only suppose according to the compass of my dissarnment, d'ye see, how the wind sets."—"Why, then, my friend

Grappling," replied Reybridge humouring his notion—" for once in your life you are widely out in your reckoning, for, according to my observation, the wind sets almost as fair as it can blow, so give directions for a post chaise and four to be ready to get under weigh by five o'clock to morrow morning." At this command, accompanied by an encouraging smile from his master,—Joe applied his fingers to his mouth in token of his satisfaction, and withdrew, without saying another word, to execute the orders he had received. Notwithstanding our hero's anxiety to reach London early in the evening of the following day, Sunday, the day only before that on which the nuptials of Lord Westmere and Louisa were to be celebrated, it was near ten o'clock ere he arrived at the hotel. A vast concourse of people was assembled before the door, and he was shocked to observe traces of blood along the passage leading to the stair-

case. Two waiters immediately brushing through the mob, who were now on the point of dispersing, opened the chaise door, and Ralph, as he alighted, requested to be informed if any body had been hurt, and what was the meaning of the blood on the floor. "A very sad affair, Sir, indeed!"—replied one of the waiters, "an *elderly gentleman*, crossing over to the hotel, was suddenly knocked down by villains, and though a surgeon was instantly sent for, I fear there is little hope of his recovery!" "Great God!" exclaimed Reybridge, who thought only of Mr. Denham, and the mysterious stranger, who might be his father. "An elderly gentleman?—What!—An *officer*?—a *clergyman*?—Do you know the gentleman?"—I never saw him before, Sir;" replied the waiter—"but I don't think he answers to either of these descriptions."—"But," resumed our hero, suddenly recollecting himself;—"Are the assassins pursued?"

"Yes, Sir;" returned the man;—"the watchmen are after them in all directions." "Your grandmother's after em!" exclaimed Joe, now rushing forward, sparks of indignation flashing from his eyes!—"Tell me, brother, what course did they steer?" At this instant hearing a noise in the street, he grasped his bludgeon and darted out of the hotel without waiting for any reply, and even heedless, for the first time, of Ralph's orders to return. "Indeed!" resumed the waiter,—"I fear all pursuit to-night will be in vain, for it is very dark, and there are so many turnings and windings in this part of the town, —besides, Sir, the most curious part of the story, is, that if they are robbers that knocked the poor gentleman down, they are rather extraordinary ones, for the devil a bit did they stay to plunder him, for his watch, his pocket book, and his money were all found safe enough in his pocket."—"Can I see them?" cried Ralph eagerly.—"Why yes, Sir;"

continued the waiter. "I dare say you may, but the poor gentleman's *friend* has taken charge of them." "His friend!" exclaimed our hero—"Then the poor man was not alone?"—"Yes he was, Sir; when the assault happened;" continued the waiter—"but this *friend* came to the hotel a few minutes after, and, now I think of it, *he*, Sir, *was an officer*."

Agonized by the dreadful apprehensions that now assailed him, our hero demanded, yet dreaded, to be conducted to the chamber of the wounded person. Suspense was still more dreadful than the terrible certainty, and he followed the waiter up stairs. At the room door he met the surgeon, who, with his finger to his lips, cautioned silence. "Tell me, Sir;" whispered our hero.—"Is there any hope?"—"But little, Sir." replied the surgeon,—"I have, however, sent for two gentlemen of great professional skill, whose opinions *may* be of use;—but, indeed, the scull is dread-

fully fractured!"—Ralph could hear no more: trembling from head to foot he glided into the chamber. It was gloomy and spacious; two candles were dimly burning on a marble slab, not far from which was the bed on which lay extended the expiring sufferer!—close by, and watching each motion of the lips and features, sat a thin emaciated man in an officer's uniform. The face of Fitzallen had been before seen by Ralph in its emaciated state, and it was not easily to be forgotten. Involuntarily he sprung forward, and the old lieutenant received him in his arms. A groan from the dying man forbade the greeting to go farther, and as our hero approached, with his friend, nearer the bed, he fixed his eyes with a desperate resolution,—not on the unruffled countenance of his beloved and pious tutor,—but on the ghostly and distorted features of Valpine!—A deadly faintness came across him, and he turned shud-

dering from the dreadful spectacle!—The poor wretch had however seen the youth he had injured in the tenderest point, and the shock was too great for his already fleeting spirits!—He sprung up from the bed in strong convulsions, but falling back again, as he endeavoured to speak, instantly expired!"

Fitzallen, in whose countenance the ravages of sickness and misfortune were never more discernible, no sooner perceived that all was over, than lifting up his hands devoutly to heaven he exclaimed—"God, in thy mercy, receive his soul!"—Then turning to his young friend—"Reybridge," said he;—"we must quit this scene; it is too terrible!" Accordingly having given orders concerning the body, he conducted Ralph into another room, where he ordered candles and refreshments. Our hero was no sooner alone with the worthy lieutenant, than again throwing himself into his arms.—"To see you, once

more," exclaimed he—" is indeed most gratifying to my heart, but to see you at *such* a time, under circumstances so unaccountable, so dreadful !"—" Pray, sit down,"—replied the lieutenant drawing chairs.—" When we last parted, you may remember it was at the door of the coach which was to convey me to Holyhead on my way to Ireland. To what sudden inspiration it was owing, I know not ; but I breathed a petition to heaven that at some future period of my life I might be able to repay the great obligation that I then owed you. No less a one my beloved, my amiable, benefactor than the preservation of lives more dear to me than my existence. Oh ! Ralph ! my prayer *was heard !* But your friend has suffered ; greatly has he suffered !—wonderful have been his escapes, but great is his victory !—Severe have been his trials, but unbounded are the mercies of God !"

" You amaze, you awe me, Fitz-

allen," replied Reybridge—"Oh tell, quickly tell me the meaning of your words!" "'Tis late," replied the lieutenant. There are parts in my story that will agitate you.—" To-morrow." —" To-night!" interrupted our hero.— " Suspense for an hour will be torture to me!"—" Well, then;" rejoined his friend, " when we have refreshed ourselves a little, I will relate it." The waiters now appeared with supper, and when the cloth was removed, he began in the following manner.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

CHAP. VIII.

A Narrative.

"WHATEVER may have been my sufferings, my young friend, since our memorable separation in London, and whatever the sufferings of those most dear to me, I must ever gratefully reflect on those extraordinary interpositions of Providence which have rescued me, first from the jaws of death, and then distraction, that I might be the instrument of lifting my benefactor from the dust, and bringing down vengeance on his infamous persecutors.

"You will remember the important business that was carrying me to Ireland. On my arrival at Holyhead about twelve o'clock at noon on the second day

after my quitting you, I heard that the Dublin packet would sail in the evening, and immediately settled with the captain for my passage. At the inn, where I put up, I fell in with several people, who, I was informed, were to be my fellow passengers, but one of these only attracted my attention, and who seemed, indeed, by his appearance, to have been as familiar with misfortunes as myself. To this gentleman I made one or two advances to conversation, but he constantly evaded them, and seemed to wish to be left entirely to his own gloomy contemplations. A lady, who had the appearance of being either his sister or his wife, was, by far, more communicative; but her remarks were tedious and uninteresting, and I impatiently waited for the captain's summons for us to go on board. The weather for several days, had been squally; and the appearance of it, at the present period, by no means favourable. About

five o'clock the wind increased, and though it did not blow what an old seaman would call a gale, yet there was enough to make the captain hesitate a little. It blew, however, from the right quarter, and this circumstance determining him, a few hours gave us up to one of the most terrible tempests imagination can conceive !—We scudded, for some time, before the gale; but a strong current setting in, and it being no longer possible to carry any sail, we drifted to leeward very fast, and, at length, to complete our distress, lost our rudder. We were thus at the mercy of the waves, and all hopes of saving the vessel abandoned ! To describe to you my sensations at this awful moment, is impossible. To me, individually, the apparently certain death that was every minute approaching nearer, had no terrors ; but my wife and children !—left unprotected ; unbefriended ; exposed to poverty ;—to in-

sult!—These were indeed most bitter reflections!—Even now my blood runs cold at the recollection of them. I had remained below in the cabin whilst there was any hope of preserving the packet, but, as she was now driving impetuously towards the rocks, and our fate seemed inevitable, I was preparing to rush on deck, and make a last struggle in the waves for the preservation of my life, when I was checked by the melancholy gentleman whom I have before described. From the commencement of the storm, he had been in terrible agitation; and the apprehension of approaching death seemed to be aggravated by some mental affliction that I thought, at the time, had too much the appearance of springing from a guilty conscience. The poor woman his wife, as I afterwards understood she was, was lying in a sort of hammock near him, but insensible from extreme sickness and terror, to the misery and danger around her. The husband had

with considerable exertion and difficulty, recovered an escritoir which had been dashed, almost to pieces, by the violent motion of the vessel. Instantly, with convulsive eagerness, he snatched a packet from it, apparently of letters, and putting it into my hands, 'Sir,' said he, 'your countenance tells me you have honour and humanity. Save yourself; and, if it be possible, *that packet; you* may yet gain the shore: I cannot. Miserable wretch that I am! But I trifle. That packet, Sir, unfolds —Oh God!—If it be lost, ruin, misery, and disgrace will fall upon unexampled goodness, perdition everlasting will be the just punishment of the miserable *Rushden!*—Open it, Sir, read it, and, convey what you find in it—' Here a dreadful crash announced that the vessel had struck. Securing, instantly, the mysterious packet as firmly as I could in my bosom, I rushed upon deck, but had scarcely been there two minutes,

when the vessel separated, and I found myself, in a few moments after, clinging to a part of the wreck!—In this terrible situation, expecting every instant to be dashed from my hold, and swallowed by the waves, exhausted as I was, both in body and mind, I had not strength to struggle with my destiny, and one tremendous sea swept me, as I then believed, to eternity!—But the eye of Providence was upon me, and I awoke from a state of stupefaction to a sense of bodily anguish such indeed as I had never felt before;—but it was this sense of pain that preserved my life. I had been carried, by the wave above mentioned, so near to the shore, that before I could be driven back, another lodged me on the point of a rock to which I clung with a strength almost miraculous! My recollection was restored to me by the violence of this shock, I redoubled my exertions accordingly, and before the returning wave could preci-

pitate me to destruction, gained the summit of the precipice that overhung me, and found myself on dry ground, and an open country before me. But the billows were still, to my terrified imagination, rolling over my head, and I ran forward, unconscious of my security from further danger, till, completely exhausted, I fell senseless with my face to the earth! Alas! my dear Ralph, had I, from this deplorable condition recovered only to encounter sickness and debility, you would, long ere this, have been rescued from the persecutions and disappointments you have sustained, but I was visited by the greatest of all human calamities,—the deprivation of my reason. The various conflicts that had so long harrassed my mind, that mind could no longer support, and when recovered from the agonizing trance into which I had fallen, not a ray, not a vestige of understanding remained.

"We were shipwrecked on the coast of Wales near Cape St. David's, and not many miles from the town of Cardigan. I was found the next morning, by an honest farmer and two of his men, to whose humanity, under Providence, I am indebted for my life. Mr. Glenwyn ordered me to be carried to his own house about two miles off, where I experienced, as I was afterwards told, every attention during a long and severe fever, in the paroxysms of which I could scarcely be kept down to my bed. At these moments the ghastly forms of the unhappy Rushdens were always before me! At other times, I raved about the packet, and the farmer who almost constantly attended me wisely supposing it contained papers of consequence, kept it from my view. It had, indeed, been providentially preserved from the deep,—fortunately I had placed it next my skin, buttoning my coat and waistcoat tightly over it; and this I did, under the idea,

that even if I should be drowned, my body might float to shore, and those invaluable, for oh! Ralph! they are indeed invaluable, papers be still preserved. It had been taken care of by the worthy Mr. Glenwyn himself, but he did not think proper whilst I was likely to live, to let it go out of his possession, especially after hearing my ravings about it. Together with the packet, was a letter from my poor wife; which I had put into my waistcoat pocket; and though the writing was almost defaced from the effects of the salt water, yet enough was legible to satisfy Mr. Glenwyn of our being nearly related, and the place of our abode in London. In consequence of this discovery, a letter was dispatched to my dear Lucy apprizing her of my dreadful illness.

Alas! what must her situation have been, when even this melancholy intelligence was hope and joy to her heart,

for she had read an account of the loss of the Holyhead packet, and having heard nothing of, or from me, concluded I must have perished with the greater part of the unfortunate crew. I need not add that Mrs. Fitzallen, with my little ones, Tom and Charles were, in a very short time, at my bed's side, and it was then judged expedient that I should be removed, by slow stages, to Cardigan, at which place a most excellent physician resided, no less remarkable for his skill, than his humanity. Under the eye of this good man, Trevorley by name, my fever soon left me, but my mind was as disordered as ever. Sometimes a faint recollection of my wife, but these lucid intervals were seldom, and suddenly passed off. Insanity indeed of the most dreadful kind, sometimes followed, and Dr. Trevorley was obliged, however reluctantly, to recommend my being confined in a house appropriated for lunatics. My poor wife

was extremely shocked by this decision, and, whilst she strenuously opposed it, ventured to explain to the worthy man the critical situation of our affairs in Ireland,—and as she accompanied this explanation with a brief account of the former misunderstandings between my cousin, Mr. Howell and me, the doctor observed that it was highly probable such a legacy *had* been left me, and not less likely, that Crosbie the attorney had withheld it; as he had had dealings himself with the man, and knew him to be as great a knave as ever disgraced his profession. 'However,' observed he—'my dear madam, I tell you what. I have, myself, some private business to transact at Limerick, and though I did not mean to begin my travels till the spring of next year, yet, upon an occasion like the present, mere convenience should give way. I shall get ready therefore to set off in a few days, and if you can furnish me with such instruc-

tions and authorities as may enable me to battle it out with this fellow, I think I shall succeed in shewing him that a doctor is a match for an attorney !'—To this most generous proposal, my poor Lucy could only shed tears of gratitude ; she then entered more at large into the unhappy cause of my first difference with my cousin, and which I doubt not, my dear Ralph, you recollect ; and then gave him the direction to my friendly informer Pat Mullins in London, and which the doctor observed, was amply sufficient to alarm the lawyer, should the truth be on Mullins's side.—In short, in the course of a week, this benevolent man departed, more on our affairs than his own, leaving with Mrs. Fitzallen such a sum of money, for he had not to learn the slender state of our finances, as was sufficient to answer all domestic exigencies, till his return ; which he chearfully prophesied would be speedy, and successful."

Here the lieutenant recruited his spirits with a glass of wine; our hero did the same; and as it is by no means impossible that some of our readers may wish to follow their example, we shall put an end to this chapter.

CHAP. IX.

The narrative concluded, and the conversation which followed, in which a certain Stranger is brought upon the carpet, whose name and exploits the sagacious reader is yet to be made acquainted with.

After a pause of a quarter of an hour, Fitzallen resumed his discourse as follows. "Our excellent friend the doctor, notwithstanding my wife's opposition, could not reconcile it to his conscience to leave me deprived of that medical assistance he knew to be absolutely necessary for my recovery, and at length plainly told her, that my infirmity of mind did not now proceed from any bodily indisposition, though possibly it had been originally brought

on by it, and that there were certain methods to be observed in effecting a recovery, which, though lenient in themselves, except in very desperate cases, were not of a description to admit either of the attendance of herself, or her children. That he would see me placed under the care of a person of great eminence in the peculiar branch of the profession, a man of strict honour and great humanity, and who would, with God's blessing, restore to me the light of reason. These arguments were not to be opposed, and I was removed to a small hospital for lunatics about three miles only from Cardigan, and placed under that kind of regimen and discipline which the nature of my case appeared to require.

"From that melancholy period, till within these three weeks, my dear boy, has your friend remained in a state equally insensible to grief or joy. Yet my treatment was not harsh, my dis-

order was managed with more than common success, and was so far subdued, that I had occasional intervals of calmness, and even of reason. These moments I now remember to have employed in devotion; and earnestly praying to the Almighty for a perfect restoration of my senses. My orisons were not poured forth in vain, and the prospect of a complete recovery grew brighter and brighter. But though my amendment was slow, the sorrows of my poor wife were considerably alleviated by the success of Dr. Trevorley's negotiation in Ireland. Scarcely could she believe it possible, that in the short space of a few months, a lawyer, and such a lawyer as Crosbie, had been brought to refund so large a sum of money as he really did. The worthy physician had, however, been as good as his word, and thinking it better to come to the point with a shuffling fellow at once, procured a letter from Pat

Mullins, which, after some preliminary conversation, he showed to the astonished attorney, thus preventing all evasion, had Crosbie even been prepared to have practised it. After some desperate struggles he was at length compelled to confess, that the legacy in question had doubtless been left by Mr. Howell to Mr. Fitzallen, but that a multiplicity of business had prevented him from continuing his enquiries about me after the first year, and that, as he did not know in whose hands to deposit the cash, he had reserved it by him till the legal demand should be made. This excuse, the doctor thought proper, conditionally, to admit ; and it was stipulated that, after three months *law*, not only the principal but the *interest* thereon should be paid into his hands, the lawyer, for certain cogent reasons, not thinking it politic to start any farther objections. In consequence whereof, at the time appointed, Mr.

Crosbie, with many a bitter curse between his teeth, took Dr. Trevorley's receipt in full for the sum of 4,050*l.* being the principal and interest for seven years at five per cent. per annum; and returned in triumph with this delightful independence, to Cardigan. It was about a fortnight after the doctor's return, that I began progressively to recover; still months rolled on without any material alteration for the better, and it is only three weeks ago since my complete restoration took place.

"One night Dr. Trevorley coming rather late to see me, observed as I was sleeping, a composure and an animation in my countenance which at once surprised and pleased him. He consulted with Mr. B—— who had the care of me, on the change, and Mr. B—— observed that the expression of my features was such as to confirm his best hopes, and that he had little doubt of my perfect restoration in a few days. The

time was much shorter than the good man had calculated upon. Whilst they were speaking, a profuse perspiration broke out from all parts of my body, and as the doctors conceived this to be an effort of nature that should be assisted, additional blankets were placed upon me, and in this state they left me to wait the crisis. It was, I bless God! favourable. I awoke, not indeed till the following morning, but I awoke once more to *reason* and to happiness. In a few hours I found myself in the arms of my wife and children, with an understanding as vigorous as Ihad ever found it, and with a perfect recollection of the terrible scenes that had preceded my fever and my madness.

"For the three first days of my recovery, my watchful physicians were not without apprehensions of a relapse, but my increasing spirits and consistent behaviour dissipated, at length, every fear.

"The first moment I could tear myself from my Lucy and her children, to whom I felt, as it were, a second time united, I begged Dr. Trevorley to accompany me to the house of the humane farmer Glenwyn, not only personally to return my warmest acknowledgements to him for preserving me in the first instance from destruction, but to receive from him certain papers which I had a faint recollection he was in possession of. I was, however, by no means certain that the important *packet* was among them; yet, when I called to mind the manner in which I had secured it in my bosom, it seemed impossible it could be missing. Still I trembled, and doubted, and on my arrival at the good farmer's house, though I embraced my benevolent preserver with the most grateful warmth, yet he perceived my whole frame agitated from some other cause, and as he perfectly well remembered my outcries about the packet, he

did not hesitate to attribute my emotions to the apprehensions of this eventful article not being forthcoming. Running, therefore, instantly to his bureau, he brought it to me entire as he had taken it from my bosom, and as I had received it from the unfortunate Mr. Rushden. At the sight of it, recollecting the awful and mysterious manner, and the dreadful moment in which it had been delivered to my charge, I thought my senses would again have forsaken me. Dr. Trevorley perceiving this commotion of mind with some alarm, endeavoured to divert my attention to other topics, and as I was myself too well aware of the critical state both of my bodily and mental health, I determined to lock up my treasure till I had gained sufficient stamina in both, to read its contents.

"In the mean time I yielded to my friendly doctor's recipe, and joined in

the general conversation whilst we remained at the worthy farmer's.

"But when curiosity, and that of the most interesting nature, assails, how few are there who have the virtue to adhere to resolutions.

"On our return to Cardigan at night, and when I had retired to my chamber; —I opened,—I perused,—at the hazard of relapsing again into madness, I perused the momentous contents of this extraordinary packet!

"That *you* were concerned in the memorial of this miserable man, I had not the most distant idea;—for I knew you had never even seen him, nor had you more than once or twice in the whole course of your history, mentioned his name. Great God! to find then —but to morrow you shall know all."—"Yet tell me; tell me;" interrupted Ralph, unable longer to bear his torturing suspense, "*did* my first

and dearest benefactress discover the authors of my being?"—"It is a dark tale, my dear wronged child," replied Fitzallen, but a few hours more and the whole shall be revealed. No, Ralph; your earliest and most benevolent of friends did *not* discover the authors of your being!—She could not speak. The words she is supposed to have uttered in her last moments were invented by the wretched man who lies dead in this house, but she had her other faculties about her, and the Almighty gave her strength and resolution to exert them effectually. Her sacred deposit was delivered into the hands of Rushden. It is now in mine.

"Valpine is no more. Know you, Ralph, of any other villain who has been working, like a mole in the dark, against your peace and honour?" "I know of none, Sir;" replied our hero,—"though I have long suspected such an enemy. Had Mr. Settlebright the

banker lived, I should possibly have found him out. But, good Heaven! you call this person *villain*. If, and I tremble to reflect on such a circumstance, he be a rich, a prosperous relation!"—"He is a *murderer*!" exclaimed Fitz-allen, in a tone that chilled our hero's blood! "A monster, whose dreadful crimes years of penance, severer than was ever inflicted by the iron hand of superstition, could not expiate!"—Here the lieutenant arose and walked hastily about the room. There was a fiery expression in his eyes which made our hero tremble in his chair; for he thought, should a second shock of insanity be impending over this dear and inestimable friend, it might fall before his mysterious story could be revealed, and then, where or to whom could he apply for Rushden's important packet? From this fearful apprehension, he was, however a little relieved, when the lieutenant, returning to his seat, resumed the

conversation as follows. "Your tutor has, no doubt, informed you of *my visit* to him. To morrow I must visit him again, and *you must go with me;* for to morrow he must know who I am, and who *you* are." Here the lieutenant paused; but as our hero's eyes seemed to demand further explanation, he arose from his seat, and taking a candle from the table—"I read," continued he, "in your features, my dear Ralph, a curiosity to know why I have chosen my scene of discoveries at the earl of Ardendale's house more especially on a day set apart for joy and festivity;—but my reasons on this head cannot be explained to night. In the morning you will be better able to hear them; till then, God protect you!—good night." And then without speaking another word, he retired to his chamber, and the waiters being summoned, conducted our hero, agitated by a thousand hopes and fears, to his apartment.

CHAP. X.

The History goes back to Grosvenor-square. The Rector's mysterious friend pays him a second visit.

The more Mr. Denham reflected on the mysterious visit of the stranger, and the sudden and extraordinary alteration in the conduct of Valpine, the less capable was he of forming any probable conjecture how matters would terminate. Instead of the explanation he was to have received from this unfortunate man, by word of mouth, the following short note was delivered to him on Sunday morning about the time Valpine had settled to call.

"TO THE REV. CHARLES DENHAM.

"Sir,

"I cannot fulfil my promise. Sickness, both of body and mind, weighs me down. Yet I would have made the effort, had I not known *who* has already been with you. *He* will clear up every thing.

"A. VALPINE."

Sunday morning.

The rector was now satisfied that what his unknown visitor had said to him, and the cautions he had given, though under the veil of mystery, demanded serious attention. In his countenance he had seen, there was a dignified sincerity that put to flight suspicion; and his manner had been equally solemn and affecting. Determined, therefore, to refrain from the opposition he had before planned to the union that was to take place, on the following day, he

met lord Westmere at dinner without any appearance of resentment for what had so lately passed between them; and the young lord who had been led to expect a very different conduct, could not suppress his satisfaction. "My lord," said he addressing the earl—"I have behaved ill to Mr. Denham, lately. I had reasons, which I will hereafter explain to your lordship, to think that Valpine, the man you dismissed from your service, and in whom I own I was deceived, had a plot against me to deprive me of my beloved Louisa!—My dear tutor remembers, that when I first imparted these suspicions to him, I was petulant; I was ungovernable: to my shame be it spoken, disrespectful."

"Pray, say no more, my lord,"—interrupted the rector—"what is past I shall be happy to forget in the *confidence* of your *future* happiness." Westmere looked down. Mr. Denham marked the changes of his countenance with re-

newed distrust and apprehension. "Valpine in a plot to deprive you of Louisa!" exclaimed the earl;—"ridiculous!"—"my dear father," replied Westmere—"Believe me I have reasons for suspicion." "Well, name them,"—rejoined lord Ardendale. But immediately observing that Miss Leybrook looked pale and agitated, he continued—"but, no matter. The slanders of such a wretch as Valpine should not surely be an interruption to our present happiness. Besides, it is evident that whatever his scheme was, it has failed, or rather it never could have been attempted." Then changing the subject the conversation took a different turn; yet there was absence and agitation in the manners of lord Westmere, and he seemed glad of the opportunity of Miss Leybrook's retiring to her chamber to withdraw himself from the scrutinizing glances of Mr. Denham.

Louisa's heart, in the mean time, was torn by the acutest anguish. Whilst her

guardian's life was in danger, lord Ardendale, her only surviving relative who, since her grandfather's death had treated her with the tenderness of a parent,—she thought not of the greatness of the sacrifice she had made to his wishes, and whilst it seemed to summon him again to existence she even gloried in it! but when she saw the danger over she would cheerfully have laid down her own life to have retracted the fatal promise. That she could never *love* lord Westmere her heart had told her long before she saw the amiable Reybridge; but the fine understanding she possessed, the grateful recollection of her grandfather's kindness to her, and her earnest wishes on that account to fulfil an engagement he had, when living, so anxiously planned,—had induced her to wave, in her own mind, this circumstance, material as it was, under the pleasing expectation that a son of the earl of Ardendale could not be destitute of a good temper and an elegant

mind. Grievously therefore was she disappointed, and greatly was she surprised, to find him deficient in both. His late conduct, indeed, had claimed her attention, and even called for her approbation; but it was only, since the positive promise she had made him of her hand, that she began to apprehend with Mr. Denham it had been merely assumed:—His attentions to her in the capacity of an admitted lover had neither softness nor delicacy in them, and he appeared in her eyes more boisterous, more inconsiderate, more offensive than ever. Hence the agitations she had betrayed on his self-accusation at dinner. She saw herself on the verge of ruin, but it was a ruin she could not now avoid;—her destiny was irrevocable, and she withdrew to conceal emotions which might be productive of uneasiness to lord Ardendale, but to her could bring no relief. It was late in the evening before lord Westmere re-

turned from settling some trifling business with his lawyer on the subject of settlements. Though he had dined at home, it was apparent from his flushed countenance and unsteady gait that he had been since deeply engaged over the bottle, a circumstance which shocked lord Ardendale, as much as it disgusted and increased the alarm of the good rector.

The earl, in spite of his partiality, retired to his room without deigning to notice the youth, and the rector was preparing to follow his example, when Westmere, recollecting himself, endeavoured to detain the good man. "What's all this?" said he—my father leaves me in anger, Mr. Denham, surely my being in good spirits cannot have offended him? On the eve of my marriage, too, with my angelic Louisa!"

"If your lordship *can* sleep," retorted the rector, with severe displeasure darting from his eyes, "let me advise you

to retire to your room. In your present condition I cannot condescend to talk to you any more than your father." Thus saying the rector withdrew, and lord Westmere, after giving orders for coffee to be brought to him retired sullenly to his chamber.

A little before ten o'clock on the following morning, as the good rector was preparing to attend the breakfast parlour, his *mysterious visitor* again appeared before him. "I am now come sir;" said he "to inform you who I am. My name is *Fitzallen,* the friend of the amiable child of your adoption, whom I have once more seen, and embraced. I have also intruded upon you thus early to request a favor, which, strange as it may appear, is still necessary to the *safe* accomplishment of my plans. I have already, reverend sir, given you my reasons why they can only once be explained, but I now solemnly pledge you the honour of an old soldier and a

good christian that the *wicked* alone will suffer from them." "Well, Sir," replied the rector—"if it be in my power to grant this extraordinary request, I will not refuse it, to an appeal so serious." "In what room," continued the lieutenant, "are these nuptials to be celebrated?" "In the drawing-room," replied Mr. Denham. "Could you, then, contrive," answered Fitzallen, "to place me in any situation where I might be an ear if not an eye witness of the ceremony?" Mr. Denham paused; but the pause was not of long duration:—he had promised, and he must perform. "It can easily be contrived, Mr. Fitzallen," answered he. "The adjoining room shall be your own, and I will take care you shall meet with no interruption: but, remember"—"I know, sir, what you would say;" answered the lieutenant, "but be satisfied that I will *mislead* you in nothing." "The hour"—continued the rector, "is

three :—If you call at two I will station you. Oh, Mr. Fitzallen! of the nature and extent of your important secret I have no conception; still less can I account for this mystery, but I will say no more. I should like to have seen my dear Ralph this morning, but my spirits are too much agitated."

Here a servant entering the room to announce breakfast, the lieutenant repectfully, and even affectionately, pressing the rector's hand, quitted the room.

CHAP. XI.

A "just cause and impediment."— The clouds of mystery begin to separate.

TRIFLING as lord Ardendale, under any other circumstances, would have considered his son's intoxication the night before, yet, as it was the evening immediately preceding his union with such a woman as Louisa Leybrook, the insensibility and indelicacy of such conduct filled him with the most serious regret. The propriety of Westmere's late conduct appeared now, alas, to the mortified parent, to have been merely assumed, and when he reflected on the noble sacrifice which his beloved girl had made to him, with the tender hope of soothing the last bitter moments of

dissolution, and that he was probably only requiting her angelic kindness, by bestowing her on a man in no one instance deserving of her, but who on the contrary, might, after a short period, treat her with gloomy indifference, or fly from her society altogether. His heart smote him for the selfishness of his proceedings, and he accused himself, when it was too late, of the greatest injustice and ingratitude.

In this state of severe mortification he entered the breakfast-parlour, and the first object he beheld was Louisa herself. She arose to meet him with smiles, but the earl, whose late reflections had stifled in his bosom every selfish consideration, and opened his eyes to a less partial examination of things, saw she had been weeping.

Lord Ardendale had never expected that Louisa could ardently love his son;—but, that she might, ultimately, esteem him, and that this esteem would

again ripen into love, he had, till the present moment, vainly hoped. What then were his emotions, when he beheld her, not merely indifferent to the engagement she was about to enter into, but struggling under anguish, of the extent of which he could form no conjecture.—" Merciful heaven!" cried he, sinking into a chair,—" What have I done?—Louisa you have been weeping, and this marriage, so hateful to you, shall proceed no further. Westmere, indeed is *not* deserving of you;—he is scarcely deserving of any thing that is good and amiable."—" Good God, my Lord!" replied Louisa.—" What is this you say?—Alas!—It is now *too late.* If your lordship knew of any thing."—The earl in a moment saw the indiscretion he had been guilty of. To a woman of Louisa's delicacy, he recollected it would be impossible to reconcile, after the publicity of the intended union, a secession on either side. The

day fixed so solemnly, and the eldest friends of the parties invited; nay, the very hour approaching!—he trembled for the consequences of his folly, and thought it better, rather than keep the sweet victim of his selfishness in a moment's suspense, as to the nature of lord Westmere's fault, to explain it to her, and even to endeavour to make an apology for it. This, therefore, he almost instantly did, but it was not with his wonted confidence. With a bleeding heart he now reflected on a thousand imperfections in Westmere, which he had before been inattentive to, but which, now, dispassionately weighed in the scale with Miss Leybrook's merits, placed happiness far, far beyond her reach.

Louisa, who beheld her guardian's agitation, kindly took his hand, and smiling through her tears: "you judge, my lord," said she, "too harshly of lord Westmere's conduct last night.

His joy, if it had sincere affection for its basis, I shall not regret, and his youth must, as you say, apologize for a trifling breach of temperance.—I think, my lord," continued she with a sigh—" I shall be able to make him love and respect me, for it shall be the first study of my life to please him ; and as the son of lord Ardendale, I can never believe he will be unmindful of the laws of honour and gratitude."—" Dearest Louisa !" replied the softened earl.—" By Heaven you are an angel ! and I would give a thousand worlds if" —Mr. Denham and lord Westmere at this moment entered the parlour. Lord Ardendale sternly regarded his son, and Westmere, for the first time in his life, saw upon his father's countenance, marks of anger and grief that shocked and appalled him. He had come prepared with an apology for the condition in which he had ventured into his father's presence the night before, but now

found himself incapable of making any. He however approached Miss Leybrook to take her hand, which the earl perceiving, stepped between.—"Before you again presume," exclaimed he, "to touch this devoted hand,—swear to me that you are alike unconscious and incapable of an offence more degrading to your character, than that which stained it last night!"—Mr. Denham started, and lord Westmere's countenance underwent a total change.—"You hesitate, Sir,—speak instantly;—and beware how you deceive me."—"Deceive you, my lord?"—replied the youth,—"good heaven! can you doubt the cause of my hesitation? can you wonder at my sorrow and confusion when I find your lordship, in such an hour as this, disposed to think so vilely of me?—I came prepared, my lord, to acknowledge my weakness of last night, and to implore your forgiveness; but, if I have so entirely lost your con-

fidence; if my transgression has sunk me so low in your esteem as to render such an oath as the one you have proposed necessary."—"It is not necessary!" interrupted Miss Leybrook.—"I have the fullest reliance, lord Westmere, on your tenderness and honour; and let me intreat you, my dear guardian," continued she, turning to the earl, "to press the matter no further."—Lord Ardendale, who in the conduct of his beautiful ward, saw a resolution not to be shaken, made an effort to overcome the feelings that oppressed him, and approaching his son placed his hand into that of Louisa.—"I give you," said he, "Westmere, this invaluable treasure!—But remember, the day you prove yourself, by word or deed, indifferent to such angelic worth, from that day shall my bitterest curse pursue you to the grave!"—"And from that day," exclaimed Westmere, falling on his knees, and grasping with phrensied

eagerness the hand he held, "should I, indeed, deserve it!"

The select friends that assembled at three o'clock to be present at the wedding, were Sir Charles Daventworth, a baronet of an ancient family and considerable property in Dorsetshire, and one of the oldest and dearest friends of the late baron of Leybrook.—The earl and countess of Southerdown, and the honourable Mrs. Creswick, a distant relation of lord Ardendale's.—Sir Charles had been previously deputed to give the bride away.

The earl endeavoured to rally his spirits, and succeeded in undeceiving his unsuspicious guests, but not the rector, who could no otherwise account for this sudden change from the completest satisfaction to distrust and anxiety, than by attributing it to some private interview he must have had, unknown to him, with Fitzallen. He proceeded, however, to perform the so-

lemn ceremony, and all the parties being regularly arranged, began it in a firm and exalted voice. But the good old man had calculated beyond his strength, the efforts his present situation required. The mysterious Fitzallen he knew to be in the adjoining room; and though the lieutenant had not said he should interrupt the ceremony, yet the rector could not help fancying he would, and when he came to that awful part of the ceremony,—"I charge you both, as you shall answer at the dreadful day of judgment, if either of you know *just cause or impediment*, &c."—His voice faltered,—his hands trembled;—and turning his eyes towards the door of the room in which he had stationed his mysterious friend;—he shrunk back aghast as he saw the handle move!—The next moment determined the conflict.—Fitzallen burst into the room!—He approached the table and fixing a stern but steady eye on the bridegroom,

he exclaimed—"*I* know *just cause and impediment,* and I forbid the banns!"—"*You!*" retorted Westmere, who seemed convulsed at once with rage, astonishment, and consternation. "Who are you? and whence come you?"—"From the devouring waves!" replied the lieutenant in accents of thunder.—"From the bed of sickness and insanity! from death in all its dreadful shapes, has God preserved me, to bring thee, villain!—impostor! to justice!—Wretch! *murderer!*" continued he, pulling from his bosom a small case and opening it.—"Do you know this *picture*?—Know you the monster, that would have blasted the fair fruit of a tree so lovely? Know you the *son of Rushden?*"

Westmere fell senseless to the ground, and was instantly, by order of Fitzallen, born away by some servants of his own.

Whilst the ladies conveyed the faint-

ing Louisa to her chamber, the earl was supported by the gentlemen to a chair, where he sat for some moments in a state of total insensibility; but, beginning to recover himself,—it was judged advisable to leave him for the present with his venerable friend Mr. Denham, till he should be prepared to hear an explanation of this dreadful interruption.

In half an hour the lieutenant was summoned to return *alone*, and found lord Ardendale more composed than he expected. His lordship waved his hand for him to be seated.—"Now, Sir;" said he, "explain this dreadful mystery whilst I have breath to hear you."—"I see, my lord," replied Fitzallen, much alarmed, "that I should have prepared your lordship for this surprise. I knew not that you had been so ill, and there was no other certain mode of securing a wretch who might, on the slightest suspicion of detection,

have found means to elude the vigilance of justice, and, perhaps, on the strength of your credit abroad have continued, unmolested, his execrable depredations on your lordship's property."—"Great God!" exclaimed the earl, "what am I to think and believe? Of whom, Sir, are you speaking?—If of my wretched child, I am, indeed, of all sinners, the most miserable."—"Calm yourself, my lord;" replied the lieutenant; presenting the picture he had before held up to view. "Do you recollect this portrait?"—"Heavenly powers!" replied lord Ardendale gazing upon it whilst the welcome tears streamed from his eyes.—"Do I recollect it?—Oh my beloved Caroline! my wife, my injured wife! How should I ever forget those features?" "I have another *portrait* in my pocket:"—continued Fitzallen—"if your lordship will deign to examine it; to compare it attentively with the one you now hold, it will clear up every

mystery."—" Show, show !" replied the earl, eagerly.—" This, my lord," continued the lieutenant, producing it with a trembling hand.—" This is the picture of my young, and noble friend, of *Ralph Reybridge* !"—" Of *her son*," murmured the earl, as he beheld the pictures both together, and sunk back into his chair.

CHAP. XII.

The Memorial of Rushden.

IT was nearly an hour before lord Ardendale was sufficiently revived to hear the confirmation of the wonderful discovery with which we concluded our last chapter. The venerable Mr. Denham, who, though he had been almost as much exhausted by the wonders he had witnessed as his friend, had never quitted him, now that he saw him revive and press the two miniatures alternately to his lips, proposed that Mr. Fitzallen should be again admitted to clear up every doubt, and bring with him the much injured and beloved child.—" No, no, no," exclaimed the earl—" I cannot yet—but Fitzallen—

the messenger of comfort and joy to my wounded soul, let him approach! Oh my reverend friend! what praises are due to the great Author of all good for these unheard-of blessings!—Merciful Powers! So providential a rescue from utter ruin, misery, and disgrace! No wonder I saw in him, the gallant St. Aubyn!—Just such a youth was my Caroline's noble father reported to have been. Mild, benevolent, and guileless as our dearest Ralph!" Fitzallan now entered the chamber. Lord Ardendale would have sunk at his feet, had not the old soldier rushed forward to prevent him. "Nay, my dear lord;" cried he—"do not take from me my small portion of strength:—the events of this memorable day have left me but little, and that must be devoted to prove beyond question the identity of your noble and amiable son. The lieutenant then took from his pocket the papers the unhappy Rushden

had consigned to his care, and opening the first read as follows.

"For the weak and miserable wretch whose confession is herein unfolded, let no man weep. The torments of a base and selfish ingratitude, though now hurrying me to the grave, have scarcely yet power to subdue in me the workings of nature, to influence me to some atonement for my iniquities, by exposing the vilest of impostors!

"Yet it must be done. Perdition everlasting must pursue me if I suffer a serpent to pollute the fair mansion of innocence; if I longer conceal from the knowledge and the blessings of his noble father, his long persecuted and degraded son. Yes. The *parricide* may overtake me;—may in the bosom of his devoted parent plunge the *threatened* dagger!—still, dreadful as the blow would be, I think I shall be able to bear it better than the terrible remorse that will

surely seize on me as the deceiver and destroyer of my best benefactor. From my earliest youth I gave myself up to my passions. In the honourable character of a British officer I abandoned myself to riot and debauchery, till the villany of a wretch who abused my confidence recalled me, for a time, to sense and reflection.

"Reduced almost to the extremest want, I experienced a reverse of fortune. I married, and a deceitful calm succeeded. Satiated with vicious indulgencies, and disgusted to behold a profession which should only be filled with men of indisputable character, disgraced by the admission of rakes, sharpers, and infidels, I abandoned it; retired with my wife to the cottage of Newton Vale, and there devoutly prayed that the tumultuous scenes of life would close on me for ever. But I had offended heaven by too long a course of libertinism, and that punishment was preparing for me

which I had long deserved, and still continue deservedly to suffer. In the second year of our retirement my wife brought me—*a son.*—Accursed, for ever accursed be the hour that gave being to a monster!—My pen drops from my hand when I think of the wretch!—but let me endeavour to recollect myself. By the doctor who attended on this occasion, the child was carried to a neighbouring cottage about a mile and a half off to be nursed, my wife being too weak to afford it sufficient nourishment herself. Returning from the cottage later, one evening, than usual, a carriage drove furiously by me, and was overturned close, almost to my own door. It was the carriage of the present earl of Ardendale, then lord Westmere. Mrs. Rushden, as I approached, was affording every assistance she was able, being still in a weak state herself, towards extricating, from her perilous situation, a young lady of great beauty,

whom I afterwards understood to be his lordship's wife. How shall I go on with my narrative?—How enter upon a confession of my own complicated treachery!

"The accident proved fatal to this angelic woman, but not till she had brought into the world a child beautiful as the day. The grief of the distracted father I cannot describe!—I cannot bear to think of it. The criminal on the rack confesses not under severer torments of body than I do, now, of mind! Let me hasten to a close. The remains of lady Westmere were conveyed privately, from Newton Vale to Shrewsbury, and from thence to Ireland, attended by the young and disconsolate widower. His sweet child was left to the care of my wife and me, and an excellent nurse provided for him from Shrewsbury. Every thing had been conducted with the greatest secresy; Mr. Denham the rector of Stoke and

the good Dr. Monford being the only persons, ourselves excepted, who were apprized of the rank of our noble guests; and the former, when he could steal an hour from his professional avocations, would ride over to view our blooming little charge; Oh, God! thou knowest that at *this time* I was innocent of the least intention further to offend thee!—That my soul would have recoiled at the bare suggestion of ingratitude towards my benefactor!—for the noble Westmere had already loaded us with favours, and voluntarily engaged himself, by the most solemn assurances, never to forget our attentions to his beloved Caroline,—but weakness first betrayed me to perfidy, and yielding afterwards to the persuasions of a vain woman, I found myself bound by a chain of guilt from which it was impossible to escape. "Among several articles of value which lord Westmere had left in my possession when he accompanied the

remains of his beloved lady to Ireland, was a beautiful miniature picture of her set round with diamonds. My unfortunate wife handling it one day in a careless manner suddenly let it fall on the hearth, and cracked the enamel in such manner that neither of us had resolution enough to determine on the restoration of it in its disfigured state, to his lordship. It was proposed, therefore, by Mrs. Rushden that I should go with it to Shrewsbury on the following day and put it into the hands of a jeweller who I knew had skill enough to repair the fracture. Our only apprehension was of lord Westmere's return before the completion of the work. This objection, however, my wife overruled, and accordingly the next morning the picture was placed, by me, into the hands of my skilful friend, who assured me that if I called for it again in four days I should scarcely myself be able to discover that it had ever been

injured. With these satisfactory tidings I returned to Mrs. Rushden, and four days after again set out for Shrewsbury. But my wretched fate decreed that the nurse and the sweet infant should this time go with me. The poor woman had heard of the arrival of her sister in the town, and as they had not met for many years, was anxious to see her. I could make no objection to her request to accompany me; I was even proud of the opportunity her jaunt would afford me, of showing her lovely burden to the worthy goldsmith and his wife. On our arrival, poor Martha complained of a sudden sickness. I thought it was owing to fatigue, and taking the child from her arms proposed to send for her sister to come to her—she refused however this arrangement, said she felt herself better, and would be back in half an hour. I accordingly ordered her to go, and accepted of Mr. Madden, the jeweller's invitation to stay and dine

with him. The miniature was then shown to me, and so nicely had it been repaired, that it was only after the minutest examination that the places of the old fractures could be discovered. Scarcely had we dined, and I had began to wonder what could keep Martha so long, for I had entirely forgotten her complaint of sickness, when the fatal news was brought that the poor woman had been suddenly seized with violent spasms in her stomach, owing, as Dr. Monford, who had been sent for, said, to her drinking cold water when she was violently heated, and that he had little hopes of saving her life unless her agonies should quickly subside. I was extremely shocked by this account, and instantly accompanied the messenger to the house where the poor girl lay, but before I arrived, a mortification had taken place, and she died, in less than a quarter of an hour after.

"Distressed as I was by this unfore-

seen and calamitous event, I had little time for ruminating upon it. It became absolutely necessary that another nurse should immediately be provided for our young and precious charge; and as Mrs. Rushden was by this time able to undertake the care of her own child, I resolved to carry the young lord to Mrs. Bonner without loss of time.

I accordingly secured the miniature carefully in my fob, and with the infant in my arms set forwards on my journey.

Mrs. Bonner's house was not further from Shrewsbury than Newton Vale by cutting across the fields; and as I had not the most distant notion of being robbed, I did not scruple to take the shortest way.

The evening was setting in, as crossing a style I observed lurking among the bushes two ill-looking fellows, whom I remembered to have noticed standing at the door of the goldsmith's

shop at Shrewsbury, just before I departed; and it now very forcibly struck me that they might belong to a gang of gypsies, that had long infested the neighbourhood, and having seen me issue from the jeweller's, and suspecting that I had something of value about me, had made a point of way-laying and robbing me. My spirits were by no means in a state to combat with these dreadful apprehensions, nor was my mind much relieved by observing, at a distance, though in a different direction from the way I was going, six or seven people of both sexes miserably habited, sitting round a wood fire they had just kindled. I, however, doubled my speed, occasionally looking behind me, and resolving, should I be attacked, to defend my two precious deposits as long as I could, with a good strong oak stick, my only weapon.—The sun had set some time, and the shadows of the evening were beginning to render the

objects around me very indistinct, when I again beheld the two men who were the principal objects of my alarm, hastily making towards me. Their villanous intentions appeared in their ferocious countenances; I accordingly grasped my stick with desperate resolution, and succeeded in warding off the first blow aimed at my scull, but before I could return it I was struck to the earth. Would, that in that hour, in a state of comparative innocence, I had been sent to my account; but this indulgence was not granted me, and I recovered from the blows I had received to groan under a mental affliction, far, oh! how far severer than any bodily pain the rack or sickness is capable of inflicting. The blow on my head had only stunned me, but I had received a cut across my wrist, and the acuteness of the pain soon brought me to my senses. It was now almost dark; but the gloom around me well accorded with

the agony of my soul, when I stretched out my arms in vain for my sweet babe. Its little complainings were no longer to be heard. It had been torn from me by a remorseless and an abandoned crew, and the heir of Ardendale was destined to become the companion of thieves and assassins!—The miniature, too, was gone; but of this loss, I thought not. The child, the innocent child for ever devoted to vice and infamy!—My blood ran cold at the thought, and I should have found consolation in the comparison, had his body been lying breathless before me.

"Terrible as were my sufferings, undescribable as was my anguish, no wonder that all presence of mind forsook me, and that, instead of hurrying back to Shrewsbury to give immediate information to the magistrates of a robbery of such great importance, by having done which it is more than probable that a part, at least, of this infernal gang

would have been apprehended, I rushed forward towards Newton Vale, broke desperately into my own house, and regardless of the screams of my terrified wife, dashed myself on the floor.

"I had married a woman naturally vain, with little principle, and less affection; and the restlessness of her disposition, her fondness for admiration, variety, and distinction, was only kept under by the utter impossibility of her ever being able to support the style of life in which these, her favourite propensities, could be gratified. 'Tis true she might still have associated with, and been always welcome to some pleasant families at Shrewsbury, but she had too much pride about her to receive benefits she was not capable of returning. To such a woman, the temptations to evil were irresistible when they promised to bring her back to society with ample means of enjoying it; no sooner, therefore, had she heard my dreadful story but she

thought of that infamous deceit which has since involved us both in irremediable wretchedness.

"Recollecting, now, what I should have remembered at first, the necessity of applying to a justice, I was hastening again from my cottage, late as it was, when my wife checked me by a proposition which I had then no power to interrupt, and which I was afterwards instigated, partly by my love for her, my fears for myself, and some particles of my former dissipated habits still remaining at my heart, to accede to.—'Rushden,' said she, 'your application to a magistrate will be now fruitless; you should have thought of it sooner. The haunts of gypsies are, besides, impenetrable. In the bosom of the neighbourhood, and surrounded by the most vigilant police, they have the skill to elude the strictest search, and travel by ways unknown to any but themselves. The diamonds round the picture are of considerable value; this

circumstance will make it necessary for the robbers to hasten to the metropolis, where they will dispose of them; but the portrait itself they will destroy to escape detection, and alike exclude the possibility of identifying the child. Are these dreadful truths to be told to a father still groaning under the loss of the beloved mother?—even you shudder at the idea of what the unfortunate infant may be destined to become; what would be *his* sensations?—Listen, then, to me; nor start at the only mode to be adopted to save this amiable young nobleman from incurable despair!—*Our own boy* is but a week older,—and is healthful, and blooming. Poor Martha, you say, is no more;—and as Mrs. Bonner was the only person who attended me in my confinement, and may not yet have mentioned the circumstance to any one—what may we not effect?—consider my dear husband; shall we not in every way be justified in

adopting the expedient?—From what intolerable anguish will it not preserve our benefactor! Perhaps from self-destruction! On the other hand to what rank, fortune, and consequence shall we not raise our child, who, instead of being destined to linger out his days in ignorance and obscurity, will receive every advantage that the best education and the most splendid connection can secure to him. I do not fear Mrs. Bonner. I know that her avarice is only to be exceeded by her weakness and ignorance, and that I can amply make it worth her while to keep our secret. The good rector of Stoke has been with us so seldom, and seen so little of the poor baby that is gone, that it is almost impossible he should take any notice, or if he should, dear Phil, why we must remind him of the weakness of his eyes, that's all. For the loss of the picture we must make the best excuse we can.' I had neither spirit, nor could I find argument to oppose

this shocking proposition. I saw only the immediate danger of confessing the truth, and yielded, in an evil hour, to my wife's persuasions. Accordingly, the next morning early, she sent for nurse Bonner and our own wretched child; and after a conference of an hour, during which period I a thousand times wished the woman would prove refractory, they entered the room where I was sitting in fearful expectation; Mrs. Rushden with eyes sparkling exultation, and the other fondling her dear *young lord*, as she presumptuously called our *then* innocent infant. Our accomplice was not proof against the bribes of my wife, and had bound herself down by the most solemn oaths never to reveal our secret, provided she was to be a joint sharer in the ill-gotten wealth that might hereafter be the consequence of keeping it. The wretched woman did not however live to enjoy the fruits of her base acquiescence. She died two years after,

and though it is more than probable that during her illness she was visited by moments of compunction, yet she was too superstitious to imagine she should escape perdition in the next world for the violation of a wicked oath taken in this, however beneficial the consequence of her confession would have been to a noble family.

"Our artifice fatally succeeded.—Lord Westmere at length returned, and his caresses had never been more lavishly bestowed on his own child, than they were on our's.

"In the death of the late earl my infatuated wife looked forward to the accomplishment of her most sanguine wishes, as lord Westmere had frequently declared his intention of amply providing for us both in his own family, whenever it should be in his power. A gloomy period of eighteen years, however, elapsed before this opportunity arrived, during which, notwithstanding

the frequent presents we received from his lordship, then in Ireland, Mrs. Rushden would frequently urge me to go over. She wished to see her child although she had sacrificed her claims to him. To me, wretch that I am, the very thought was madness!—My wife's ambitious views at length began to open upon her. Lord Westmere, by the death of his father, was at length in a condition to fulfil his promises; and we were quickly made sensible that he had not forgotten them. He even condescended to visit us at Newton Vale, and here it was he proposed that I should be the steward of his large estates, and that Mrs. Rushden should be the governess and companion of his beautiful ward, Miss Leybrook. To express the joy of my poor wife on this occasion I shall not attempt; even I forget, in this sudden turn of our affairs, how little I had deserved such good fortune. Alas! could I then have seen

the blacker clouds of misery and guilt that were gathering round our heads, I think I must have sunk under the shock."

CHAP. XIII.

Continuation of the Memorial.

"Lord Ardendale had left his false son at Rothwell Castle, but the death of the old baron of Leybrook and the necessary removal of his afflicted grandchild, the young and beautiful Louisa thither made it a point of delicacy that our wretched, deceived boy, should join our party at Newton Vale. He came, accompanied by a young clergyman who had been recommended by the earl to succeed the pious Mr. Denham in the living of Stoke, and I beheld pride, gloom, and irascibility depicted in every feature. Oh, God! how unlike the benevolent, the ingenuous nobleman, our benefactor! He received our saluta-

tions with haughty indifference, and appeared to regard every body around him, the injured earl excepted, as beings of an inferior nature. But this pride was soon to receive a dreadful check, and he was destined to experience, in an equal degree with his unhappy parents, the pangs of constant and acute anxiety.

"It was on the evening of 4th of September 17—, that an express arrived from Stoke-hill; the residence of an excellent lady of the name of Reybridge, to Mr. Denham who was then with us, to acquaint him of her sudden and dangerous illness, and to request his immediate return. The shock was too violent for the weak frame of the good man. Unused to violent mental agitation, his spirits sunk under it, in short, he was unable to obey the summons, important as it was, and I was deputed to carry to his old friend his last blessing, and to receive from her any message or letter she might wish to

deliver concerning her adopted son, *Ralph Reybridge!*

"Wretch that I am! I might now have atoned for my former crimes.—A gracious Providence, mercifully threw the opportunity in my way; but I ungratefully slighted it:—gave myself over to a villain more profligate than words can express him, and surrendered myself to misery and remorse for ever!

"On my arrival, at Stoke-hill, I was ushered into the sick chamber, where lay the good old lady without sense or motion. A man of the name of Valpine, whom I had never before seen, and a Mrs. Trammel, now his wife, were standing by the bed side. They were both astonished by the sudden and abrupt appearance of a perfect stranger; on telling however, my name, and my commission, I was treated with all proper civility. Mrs. Reybridge was to all appearance, dead. Dr. Monford had, indeed, only a few minutes

before my arrival quitted the room, under a thorough conviction that all was over!—Suddenly, however, she opened her eyes, and fixing them accidentally upon me, made a motion with her finger towards a little red box that was standing under her toilet. Mrs. Trammel instantly brought it to her, but it was locked. Valpine however, observed that these were not moments to be wasted in forms, and without waiting till the could be found, broke it open.

"The dying eyes of the poor lady were now fixed on vacancy, but her trembling hand was instantly in the box, from which she drew a small ivory case. I instantly opened this, and under a sealed letter addressed to Mr. Denham, discovered——Gracious heaven! what were my sensations at that moment!—the long-lost miniature of Lady Westmere. To command myself was impossible.—"Amazement!" I cried—

"The portrait of the late Lady Westmere, and the earl may still behold his true and long lost *son!*"—At that instant Mrs. Reybridge lifted up her hands to heaven, evidently in grateful praise;—and, heaving, a short sigh, expired!

"I was now in the power of Valpine, a villain long practised in deceit, and of a selfish and unprincipled woman who would scruple at nothing to promote her immediate interests and pleasures. My frantic exclamation, at sight of the miniature, was of too important a nature to pass unnoticed. Valpine instantly snatched up the letter addressed to the good rector, opened, and began to peruse it without ceremony. At any other time I should have opposed this insolence, but my spirits had completely failed me, and I stood silently gazing on the corpse as both himself and Mrs. Trammel, who appeared to possess considerable influence

over him, read, and meditated upon the contents of that important declaration, which will be found with my own execrable memorial."

Here the lieutenant unfolded Mrs. Reybridge's letter, and offered it to the old rector, but the good man was too much agitated to receive it, and intimating, with a motion of his hand, that it was his wish to hear it read with the rest of Rushden's confession, Fitzallen proceeded as follows:

"TO THE REV. CHARLES DENHAM."

"I feel, my much respected friend, that my nerves will be too weak to allow me to fulfil my * promise of an oral communication on a certain subject, I therefore take up my pen to do it. It

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* Vide Vol. 1st. Chapter 8th.

will require, perhaps, all the indulgent consideration you possess to find an excuse for a conduct, which, on my part, I doubt, has been almost criminally weak; but, in this world, vainly can we hope to fly from imperfection; in the season of active benevolence and whilst arrogating to ourselves the credit of a virtuous behaviour, how frequently may we be guilty of the greatest forgetfulnesses, and indiscretions.

"About four years anterior to the death of my good friend Mr. Mapleton, on a Saturday, I recollect, towards the close of the autumn of 17—, it chanced that my old coachman, anxious, as I suppose, to explore some new road, had driven me further from home than I believe he had any intention of doing, and having entangled himself among some crossways with which he did not appear to be well acquainted, and the evening beginning to set in, I desired him to strike, at once, into the high

road, and to drive faster ; for, naturally timid, I was alarmed at the idea of being benighted, especially as the evening was gloomy, and the air bleak. This he was accordingly beginning to do, when the distant cries of a child, evidently distressful ones, shocked and alarmed me. I ordered Andrew to stop. The cries continued at intervals, and seemed to approach nearer ;—but judge of my horror, Mr. Denham, when my ears were wounded by the following dreadful words, accompanied by oaths too shocking to be repeated or even thought of.—'What shall we do with the brat, Jem, now we have settled the dad, I believe it will be as well to twist its neck off.'—'At the same instant, two ruffians rushed from behind a hedge,—and I neither saw nor heard more till I found myself reposing on a bed in the house of Mr. Mapleton ; his good butler and housekeeper, Mr. and Mrs. Rainsforth watching over

me; and sweetly sleeping by my side, my dear Ralph.

"When I was sufficiently recovered to hear the particulars of these extraordinary events, old Andrew, my faithful coachman, was called in, and desired to relate them, which he did, as well as I recollect, in the following words—'why please your ladyship, it was, as a body may say, a great God-send to us, that, just as I suppose you fainted away, came by a cart with three or four young fellows in it. One of them I remembered to have seen afore; a very smart lad, and so noted a jumper, that he used to go by the name of jumping Joey of Oswestry. Well, ma'am, I stopped the cart, you may be assured, for I heard what the villains said as well as your ladyship, and it was just then that they had discovered the carriage, and was running off—but I cried out that they was murderers who had killed a poor man, and was now going to

do as much by the poor baby ;—upon which the brave lads, one and all, made after them, and I saw my friend the jumper lay one of them sprawling at his feet, having first snatched the poor little child from his fangs, and taken away a miniature picture that dropped from the fellow's pocket in his fall. This and the baby he brought to me, recommending them to my care till he and his comrades could secure the other villain. But now, ma'am, seeing your ladyship in a fainting fit, I thought as how every thing ought to give way to your safety, and therefore, as I could not leave my horses, and being no further than half a mile's distance from squire Mapleton's, I thought it right to make as much haste as I could to his house with you, and, thank God! I have brought you here, and the poor little child, too, safe and sound.'

"You may easily conceive my dear and reverend friend, the effect this nar-

rative had upon my mind. The only circumstance that distressed me was my inability on the following morning, to discover the brave lads that had rendered me such signal service, and probably rescued a lovely and innocent boy from death. All the intelligence I could gain of them, was, that some country lads answering to my description had been at Shrewsbury, but were gone on to London, without mentioning any circumstances relative either to the robbery or murder that had been committed.—On examining the miniature I was equally struck with the beauty of the lady's features that it represented, as with the richness of the jewels that surrounded it.—Mr. Mapleton, who had been on a visit to a friend, now entered the parlour where I was sitting gazing at it. He had heard the whole account of the accident from Mrs. Rainsforth previously, and felt as deeply interested in the event as I was myself.

"It was a fortunate circumstance for my dear boy that Mrs. Rainsforth was at this time herself a mother, and joyfully undertook the pleasing office of nursing him. When I showed my good friend the miniature picture he was as much struck, as I had been, with the richness of the diamonds that surrounded it. He then sent for the child, and comparing the faces for some minutes together—"Assuredly," observed he, "this is the child of misfortune; and dreadful must have been the accident that could have torn him from the breast of his mother, and exposed him to a fate so terrible. That she is a foreigner and a Roman catholic seems very probable, as the jewels at the bottom of the miniature represented the crucifix.

"I now consulted with my good friend on the best mode of discovering the parents of the poor child; but on this point Mr. Mapleton seemed staggered. At length having turned the matter

over in his own mind, he thus delivered his sentiments. 'A murder so atrocious as will be generally supposed to have been committed; a lovely infant, and a miniature picture of such value lost in consequence; these circumstances will doubtless be the subject of a public inquiry, and if the real proprietors, or proprietor, be living, the name and rank will soon be known, and such a description circulated in every public newspaper, as will fully justify you in delivering your precious charge to the describer. If no such inquiries are made, and no such advertisements appear, you may rely upon it that the unfortunate deceased was destitute of friends or connexions in this country; and I should advise you to consider the poor infant as a child intrusted to you by Providence. The same Almighty hand that has placed him under your protection, will conduct to you if it be his pleasure, the rightful claimant, but

my dear Mrs. Reybridge, you are little aware of the villany of mankind, and how many thousands there are, who, were you to publish the circumstances as they stand, would come forward, and, by some well feigned story, appear to substantiate their claim to the little innocent, for the sake of possessing the valuable picture that would necessarily accompany the surrender.'

"In consequence of these observations, which, to say the truth, I had no inclination to oppose, for I already began to love my little foundling, and look upon him as my own, old Andrew and Mrs. Rainsforth, who were alone privy to the circumstances above stated, were bound over to secrecy, and in the mean time Mr. Mapleton never failed to peruse all the town and country newspapers, and constantly to visit the coffee-houses at Shrewsbury; but to our mutual astonishment, weeks passed away without the slightest notice being taken of

this extraordinary event, either as to the loss of the child or the supposed murder.

"Little now remains for me to add, dear sir. At Mr. Mapleton's particular request I consented that my little darling should remain with him, till he was six years old, and that the good Mrs. Rainsforth should have the management of him. It was more than probable he had never been christened. I need not bring to your recollection the memorable evening on which you, my reverend friend, condescended to perform that sacred duty. I say, condescended, because it was done under the veil of mystery, and in a manner which might have raised strange suspicions in a breast less charitable, and a mind less considerate than your own. You remember I once told you of a dear relation who has long been dead. Mr. Carberry.—*His* chrisfian

name was Ralph.—To him I owe my present comforts, and I felt it a pleasing tribute to the memory of my benefactor to bestow the same appellation upon my child.

" Mr. Mapleton at length paid his debt to nature, and little Ralph devolved entirely to my care, and became the welcome inhabitant of Stoke-Hill. Of the malicious whispers in the neighbourhood on this occasion, it is, I am sure, unnecessary for me to speak to you. They were not worth regard then; they are not worth dwelling upon now.

' Thus have I fulfilled my promise: and I now leave it to your superior wisdom to decide, whether, after a lapse of so many years, it may be still necessary to take any steps towards the discovery of my boy's parents. Poor Mrs. Rainsforth died a few years ago in child-bed; old Andrew the coach-

man, too, is no more:—To you, therefore, I leave it to dispose of Ralph's fate. You have educated and must decide for him. Regarding a future provision I have set aside for him, I shall speak more fully when we meet again. In this matter I have consulted with Mr. Valpine, he is a man of business, and I verily believe has the greatest affection for our dear lad.—Nevertheless, I should, I believe, have made you my first counsellor.

'I shall dispatch this to Newton-Vale to prevent your returning to-morrow, as you intended. You know, my friend, I do not see much company,—but if your noble friend the earl of Ardendale will accompany you to Stoke-Hill when you *do* return, and can be contented with the frugal fare and dull formality of an old woman, I can at least, ensure him a hearty welcome.

"I remain, my dear Sir, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

and faithful friend,

"E. REYBRIDGE."

Stoke-hill,
September 2d, 17—.

CHAP. XIV.

The Memorial concluded, and the commencement of our Hero's inauguration.

FITZALLEN having thus, beyond further question, proved the identity of his young friend; and conceiving that lord Ardendale might no longer wish to be restrained from folding his amiable child to his heart, now ventured to enquire if he should fetch him.—"Not yet, not yet,"—replied the earl, in an agitated voice, and again infolding the two pictures alternately to his bosom.—"I cannot bear it yet. Conclude, Sir, conclude your wonderful story, and then—Oh, Mr. Denham! dear and reverend friend of my father, of myself, of my lamented wife, of my long

lost injured child, your prayers can alone support me in this trying hour!" The rector summoning all his fortitude, intreated his lordship to be calm; the good lieutenant, almost as much affected as either, was scarcely able to resume the narrative, but as the earl's anxiety for the whole was not to be suppressed, he proceeded with the memorial as follows:

"To a wonderful command of temper, Valpine possessed great plausibility, and great perseverance. Shrewd in anticipating consequences, quick in the delineation of character, yet suspicious, close, and selfish. Having read Mrs. Reybridge's letter two or three times over, and consulted a little with Mrs. Trammel, he turned to me as I was still gazing on the breathless remains of the old lady, and thus addressed me.—'Mr. Rushden, though I never had the pleasure of seeing you

before, yet, if I have not mistaken the lines of your countenance, they mark you to be a man above being swayed by the absurd forms and prejudices of a rascally world. In consequence of the extraordinary discovery contained in this letter, and which your own lips have confirmed, there is but one conduct a wise man could think of pursuing; a conduct which I doubt not you will pursue, and which you shall not find either this lady or myself inclined to oppose. In me, Sir, you behold a needy man whom adversity has crossed in almost every shape, and on whom this vile world has poured a bitter portion of contempt and disappointment. You will not wonder, therefore, if I am desirous of showing it, that, although it has trampled upon me I am a worm that will turn again. On certain conditions, Sir, I will bind myself, and so will Mrs. Trammel, to whom I am shortly to have the happiness of being

united, by any obligation you may think proper, to keep your secret.'—'What secret?' interrupted I, 'what conditions?—what do you mean?'—'Hear me, Mr. Rushden;' returned he—'and dispassionately. The earl of Ardendale will not possibly be rendered more happy in the recovery of his *real* son, than he is at present. At all events, he will feel indignant at your conduct, and withdraw from you his future patronage and confidence, so that instead of retiring with him, as you are now about to do, to enjoy a respectable independence; instead of looking securely forward to the time when *your* son, (for I cannot doubt of his being your's,) the heir of a noble title and splendid fortunes, may have power and interest sufficient to place his parents almost on an equality with himself;—you will be left to end your days in your present obscurity, with the addition of a wretched youth, the remainder of whose life

your weakness will have made so intolerably miserable, that a pistol or a halter may possibly be his only refuge from despair!—would it, do you think, be in nature for him to bear a degradation so sudden? a misfortune, which, in the great catalogue of human miseries he never could have had a conception of encountering?—No; believe me he would never survive a reverse so dreadful!—Let us now try it in the other way. The *real* son has been differently educated. He has acquired different notions; has been tutored in the school of humanity; and would be lost under his new dignity even were it to be thrown upon him. Those seeds of pride and ambition which nature may originally have sown in his mind, his education and habits must long since have crushed; and, as he believes himself solely dependent on Mrs. Reybridge, and that little or no fortune can descend to him at her death, he has already

prepared himself to encounter the buffets of the world, and reconciled his mind to endure all the hardships and disappointments of a fluctuating establishment, and a wandering life. 'Trust me, therefore, my good sir, that nobody will be a whit the worse for a continuation of the deception; whereas, by a weak confession of the true state of the case, you will only bring down infamy, sorrow, and bitter disappointment upon yourself, your wife, and your son.—Listen, then, to my arrangement—the good old lady who is now fortunately out of hearing, must make *certain acknowledgments on her death-bed,* to be duly carried back by you to Newton-Vale in a letter from me, instead of the pretty epistle we have just read. Her dying-speech must appoint me *guardian* to her dear Ralph, and put into my possession *a couple of hundred pounds* for his use and benefit. This, to make all sure. Old Denham himself,

will scarcely object to interfere with such a preference; and the youth once under my tuition, (and I promise faithfully to take the best care of him,) shall soon cease to sigh for the academic shades of Rothwell Castle. His tutor no doubt will now have it in contemplation to remove him thither, but this arrangement would not so well answer our purpose, not only on the *present* lord Westmere's account, to whom he would not prove the pleasantest object in the world, but because of a very strong resemblance he bears to the picture now in our possession."—When I recollected the natural bad qualities of my wretched son's mind, and when I adverted to the bitterness of anguish a declaration of the truth would not only bring upon him, but upon his unhappy mother, all my resolutions formed in a moment of returning virtue were baffled. The specious Valpine still

rung the changes of the poet's text on mine ear,

"He that is robb'd—not knowing what is stolen,
Let him not know it—he's not robb'd at all."*

"And I, at length, consented to abide by a reference to my son. Proud and impetuous as he was, I had yet received no proof of his destitution of all principle, of all humanity!—This dreadful conviction was shortly to sum up the measure of my afflictions. Valpine would now have taken possession both of the miniature, and the letter of the deceased; but God put it in my mind, and for which mercy, praised be his name! steadily to refuse a relinquishment of these; nor could I, in all our nefarious arrangements since, be prevailed upon to part with them. In the vale of misery in which I am now

* Shakespeare.

for ever destined to wander, this is the only circumstance that can give my depressed heart a moment's consolation.

"Finding me resolute, he retired to prepare an abominable fiction, and dressed it up in terms that might have deceived the devil himself. With this in the shape of a letter to the venerable rector of Stoke,—and *the true account* of matters to my son, did I return with a groaning conscience to Newton-Vale.

*"On my arrival, I could not sustain the presence of the injured lord Ardendale; and my wife perceiving my disorder, beckoned me into another room. Here, whilst I was preparing to disclose to her the dreadful secret,—our son himself joined us, having been sent by the earl to know, from me, whether Mrs. Reybridge was alive or dead?

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* Vide 11th Chapter, 1st Vol.

—Gracious heaven! that I could forget, that I could only for an hour in the day cease to remember the terrible scene that followed the perusal of Valpine's tremendous annunciation to him! In the first pause of his frantic anguish and despair, he breathed a slow and impious vow to his Maker, in terms two shocking to be repeated, that if ever we betrayed his birth by hint, word, or deed, he would bury his dagger in our bosoms! Then rushing furiously from us, we saw him no more. My poor wife now saw, when it was too late, what might be the fatal consequences of her first evil suggestions. In her own child she beheld a monster, rendered so by pride and ambition, vices he would never have known but for *her* duplicity. She shrunk from the shocking conviction. She has endeavoured since to rally her spirits, but the threatened dagger of her impious son is constantly before her

eyes, obscuring the prospect of every hope and expectation!

* "I know not what excuse Mrs. Rushden made for the sudden departure of the unhappy wretch. He wrote a letter to lord Ardendale from an inn at Shrewsbury,—but I never saw it, nor had I spirits to enquire after him of the earl, though his abrupt behaviour had been so particular.

"Let me hasten to the end of my confession. It was stipulated by Valpine in his letter to my son, that he should receive, during lord Ardendale's life, 500*l*. per annum out of the ample allowances made him by the earl, and 1000*l*. per annum from the time of his accession to the title, besides an immediate gift of 500*l*. out of which, he, Valpine, was to pay the pretended legacy left by Mrs. Reybridge to her

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* Vide 12th Chapter, 1st Vol.

adopted child. On the part of the villain Valpine it was agreed, that it should be his constant care to initiate the noble youth in every dissipated pleasure; to obliterate by degrees, from his mind, every virtuous impression that the venerable Mr. Denham had implanted therein; and, in short, to reduce him to such abandoned habits as should ultimately deprive him of this good man's friendship, and consign him either to perpetual imprisonment, or an early grave. To this abominable scheme, however, not even the shocking apprehension of being assassinated by my own son should have compelled me to have acceded, had my consent been asked; but I was kept ignorant of the slow, but successful machinations at Shrewsbury, nor did I even suspect such complicated villany, till Mr. Denham declared one day at Rothwell castle, that his poor Ralph Reybridge,—the child of his adoption, had renounced virtue, and

had to answer for the greatest profligacy, and the deepest ingratitude. Driven to desperation by this systematic treachery I drew the false Westmere aside, and vowed that, be the consequence what it might, I would expose him to the infamy and punishment he merited, if he did not instantly place the object of his infernal persecution in a state of honourable independence. Convinced by my manner, that I would not be trifled with, he gloomily consented to my wishes, and Valpine was instructed to negotiate the unfortunate youth's transportation to a foreign country.

"In this business two gentlemen have been employed who, though ignorant of the whole execrable scheme, are still to be condemned for their want of regularity and circumspection. Mr. Settlebright, the banker, in a private correspondence with the pretended son of lord Ardendale, has been led to believe

that Mr. Ralph Reybridge is a youth whom it is *necessary* his sham lordship should assist *secretly* and through the means of another person. A sum of money has been advanced accordingly, and the banker prevailed upon to accept of this person's (Valpine's) bills. Horton, who is now arranging the business has great influence with the people about the India house, and being of a covetous disposition, will doubtless, without enquiring into particulars, forward the poor boy's departure to the utmost of his ability for the sake of the reward which is held out to him, viz. 300*l*. Mr. Settlebright is, however, an honest man, and should a future enquiry be made, wherein his evidence, though injurious to his own character for caution, may be required, he will, I doubt not, give it openly and unequivocally.

"Thus ends my memorial, which, with the unquestionable evidences of Ralph Reybridge's birth, I am resolved

to deliver to the first friend in whom I can place confidence, and then I shall die not entirely without hopes of pardon from that Being whom I have so greatly offended. It is my last solemn confession, of the truth of which I now call that Almighty Being to bear witness before whom I must shortly appear. Oh! Father of mercy! grant that it may ultimately atone, and let me hope that Thou wilt not irrevocably cast away the wretch that now humbles himself before Thee.

"PHILIP RUSHDEN."

The lieutenant having thus concluded the memorial, continued as follows—"It now remains for me to add, my lord, that Rushden himself delivered the papers I have just read to your lordship into my hands, at a moment when I knew him not, when I little expected that the awful truths they were to reveal related to my young benefactor.

This recital, however, must be for a future hearing. The day before my beloved young friend quitted England, I sketched, unobserved by him, the pencil drawing from which an elegant artist has since painted the miniature your lordship now holds in your hand. At the time, I had no intention of using it in the manner I have done to day, the thought struck me only this morning that it would better prepare you for the sight of the original. Some dreadful circumstances yet remain unexplained. Valpine last night fell a sacrifice to the fears of the villain Rushden, who had been previously warned by his accomplice of a meditated exposure of his infamy, and advised to redeem himself by flight from the punishment that awaited him:—urged, however, by the diabolical passions that consumed him, and thinking that his colleague was the only person living whose declarations he had cause to dread, he gained over by a large bribe

a couple of miscreants to way-lay and assassinate him; they are now in custody, and one of them must necessarily be admitted an evidence for the crown. Valpine's confessions correspond exactly with old Rushden's, with the exception of some particular atrocities of which the latter unhappy man was innocent. —The first of these was a shocking abuse of the good Mrs Reybridge's confidence, in squandering at the gaming table the annual sum of two hundred pounds regularly, intrusted to his management on Ralph's account, by the credulous old lady."—"Merciful heaven!" interrupted the rector, unable to suppress his indignation.— "What execrable villany!"—Then immediately recollecting the shocking death of the wretched criminal—"But God pardon him!"—Mr. Fitzallen continued. "The next thing was, his having encouraged his miserable wife in an immoderate indulgence in strong liquor, to which she at last fell a victim, and

one witness of Mr. Reybridge's secret was thus conveniently removed. The interception of Ralph's and your letters, Mr. Denham, by the Valpines and Rushden the younger, was also unknown to the unhappy father. The last letter written to you just before the youth's departure from Shrewsbury, and which I advised him to put into the post-office himself, would in all probability have reached you, had he not mentioned the writing of it to the Valpines. The false Westmere was instantly put upon the look out, and intercepted this, as he had done the others.

"When the news of the shipwreck arrived at Rothwell castle, your lordship was surprised by the anxiety and agitation, expressed by your supposed son on the occasion, yet this agitation, and the sudden journey taken in consequence, arose not from any feelings of regret and remorse at the possible fate of his real parents, but from the apprehension of, what indeed the Almighty

really brought to pass, the disclosure of his secret, in the last extremity, by his repentant father. To ascertain the number saved from the wreck, and to consult with the Valpines at Shrewsbury were his sole objects. The accident which happened to his servant on his return from the first enquiry, and the consequent care of the poor man at Valpine's house, laid the foundation of that arrangement which first introduced this partner of his iniquity into your lordship's family. Mortifying as was the reflection of having Valpine and his wife, the only surviving possessors, as he thought, of his infamous secret, so near him, he was obliged to accede to the proposal, for he well knew that his colleague's concerns were desperate, and that it was no time to parley with him on an affair of so much consequence. —The last iniquitous proceeding confessed by the miserable Valpine, in which Rushden the elder had no share,

was the detention of Miss Leybrook at Sir Frederick Lorimer's. This apparently accidental business was a preconcerted scheme,—as villanous in the design, as it would have been execrable in the execution. Valpine, ever on the watch, had overheard some part of the conversation between Miss Leybrook and her maid, respecting the arrangement for the escape of the former, from the further persecutions of the false Westmere; and instantly laying the plan before his colleague, it was resolved by this wretch that, as all hopes of being restored to the young lady's favor, appeared to be at an end, and in consequence that he should be deprived of her fortune, an acquisition which Valpine, in very significant terms told him was very necessary to the preservation of *their friendship*, something desperate should be attempted in order to force the defenceless fugitive to the acceptance of his hand, and Lorimer, actuated by

the spirit of revenge for having been formerly rejected by Miss Leybrook, readily joined in the infamous scheme which entrapped her into his power. I will not shock your ears, my lord, by an explanation of the diabolical contrivances, assisted by the co-operation of an abandoned woman living with this vile baronet, by which this amiable and excellent young lady, but for her own resolution, might have been reduced to the lowest state of degradation;—let it suffice, that the Being whose delight it is to guard the purity of innocence, sent your noble though then unknown child, to her rescue;—and, oh, my lord!—in every instance will it be found that the Almighty has watched over these amiable supports of your illustrious house! By wonderful interpositions has he extended his protecting hand, and though, for a while, he has suffered virtue to be abased, and vice to triumph, yet what will the boldest disciples of scep-

ticism say when they revert to the consequences? Let the deluded proselyte that seeks for *innocent* enjoyments at the sensual shrine of Epicurus,—let the *liberal* philosopher, who, *refining* on philosophy, sacrifices his wife, his children, his parents, and friends to *general utility*,—let them now come, and in the face of these awful occurrences, unblushingly deny the superintendence of Providence! Let them set up their idol, *chance*, and children will laugh when they are told it was chance that warded off* the blessing of departing piety from infamy and imposture; that preserved from the devouring waves the sacred testimony by which a noble and virtuous family were to be snatched from contamination and misery!—No!—that very sensation of unutterable gratitude which proceeds from a

* Vide lord Ardendale's letter to Mr. Denham in the 8th Chapter of the volume.

sense of happiness conferred by the Supreme Being, and which I now see glowing in the countenances I behold, is an emanating particle of his immediate inspiration!"—" 'Tis just,—'tis true!" exclaimed the earl; whilst a religious enthusiasm glistened in his eye—" and, now;—now I think I can behold *him*. Where is he, Fitzallan?—The son, the true child of my beloved—?" "Here! here!" exclaimed our hero, suddenly bursting into the room, and throwing himself into his father's arms! Further utterance was denied him; and lord Ardendale, equally incapable of speech as he held him to his throbbing bosom, still kept his eyes bent towards heaven, whilst the venerable Denham sunk upon his knees, and poured forth praises and thanksgivings to the great Author of all good!

And, here, as we dare not attempt to give a higher colouring to this picture, we shall drop the curtain over

it, and leave a little, as usual, to the imagination of the good natured reader.

While the rector, according to his promise, was privately conducting the lieutenant to his own little room, prior to the marriage ceremony, he was astonished to meet Ralph, and more so when our hero, pressing his hand to his lips, discovered an emotion equally new and unaccountable. There had, however, been no time for explanation, and Reybridge to whom the secret of his birth had been disclosed early in the morning, remained in an adjoining closet till Fitzallen was a second time summoned to lord Ardendale's presence. Our hero and his friend then ascended to his lordship's chamber together, Ralph having been cautioned to remain at the door, till his noble father should be ready to receive him. What followed has already been related, and this brings me to the end of the fourteenth chapter.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL.

CHAP. XV.

Being the longest and the last: and in which another interesting discovery *takes place, which it is devoutly to be hoped our sagacious readers will not have foreseen.*

Notwithstanding the danger of digressing just now, I must positively expend a few drops of my ink in blessing those considerate and judicious critics who first gave their sanction to an author's *capping*, if I may so term it, his chapters. Many are the instructive and entertaining works that I have seen thrown aside, for want of a nice little catching motto, mysterious intimation, or significant allusion to decorate these useful divisions of the history. Field-

ing, the delightful author of the Foundling, makes a most liberal and dexterous use of these caps in that admirable work, particularly in one instance, where he informs the reader that the chapter is a very short one, in which, however, are introduced "a Sun, a Moon, a Star and an Angel."*—So that notwithstanding his reader might have been inclined at this part of the history, which if I rightly recollect is not the most interesting or whimsical, to have thrown his book aside, yet he naturally feels a curiosity to know how, and for what end, these celestial bodies are introduced. Before he finds that out, however, the skilful novelist brings him very nearly to the close of the chapter. Now I have little doubt but that most of *my* readers having come, at length, to the kernel of this my literary nut, which they

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* Vide Tom Jones, Book 11th. Chap. 3d.

have been so long employed in cracking, would have considered my *finale* as little better than the remaining husk about the shell, and have skipped it accordingly, but for my introductory intimation at the top. As it is, I think I am pretty secure, for by the time I have made the discovery promised, I shall have got so very near to that goal on which is inscribed *finis*, so desirable to the author, and, nine times out of ten, the reader, that a page or two either one way or the other, will make little difference.

The flood of joy that overwhelmed the senses of Ralph on being thus unexpectedly raised from indigence and obscurity, to the arms of a doting father, the heir of his fortunes and dignities, and the inheritor of his virtues, seemed to preclude the possibility of augmentation; but when the earl introduced him as his beloved son, to the tender, trembling, blushing Louisa, more ex-

quisitely lovely than he had ever seen her:—when, *once more* encircled in *her* arms, he felt the flutterings of a heart no longer agitated by anguish and apprehension, but confirming the first sweet acknowledgments of her virgin affections, he sickened with delight, and starting from the intoxicating delirium, owned on the more tranquil bosom of his venerable tutor, that it was felicity too great to bear.

Yet notwithstanding this transition from wretchedness to unspeakable happiness, it was not without the most anxious concern he recollected, that, since the night of the wretched Valpine's assassination, he had not once seen his faithful servant Grappling. He remembered the abrupt sally of the old sailor after the ruffians, but so many other things of greater consequence had since engaged his attention, that he had thought no more of the circumstance. He was now, therefore, on the point of

commencing the strictest search for his old shipmate, when the following letter was brought to him by one of the waiters of F—'s hotel, which Ralph immediately opened, and read. The contents were as follows:

"TO HIS HONOUR MR. RALPH REYBRIDGE, ON BOARD THE HOTEL IN OXFORD STREET, OR ELSEWHERE.

"Please your Honor,

"This comes to inf rm you that being resolved to crowd all sail in pursuit of them blood-thirsty pirates that committed that damn'd horrid murder, d'ye see, why I somehow or other run a little out of my course, and not being well acquainted with the shoals and quicksands of these high latitudes to the westward, I ran a ground on a sudden, and my right arm went by the board, smack. The watchman, how-

ever was close astern, and convoyed me to this here place, it's Thingumbob's Hospital, where the doctor has spliced my limb, and says as how I shall come round again in a shake, if so be a lubberly fever don't bear down upon us. Howbeit I hope your honour will come within hail, as I'm at present little better than a log on the water, and can neither attend to, nor answer signals, being your honour's faithful servant till death.

"JOSEPH GRAPPLING."

On further inquiry it was found that honest Joe had, in the eagerness of his pursuit tumbled over a heap of stones, and was taken with a broken arm to St. George's Hospital. Fitzallen, who had been highly delighted with the style of Grappling's epistle, and felt almost as anxious as our hero to see the good old tar comfortably lodged, and properly attended, received Ralph's and the

earl's consent to pay a visit to the veteran, and bring him in a coach to Grosvenor square without loss of time. The lieutenant on his arrival at the hospital, anticipating the satisfaction he should experience in unfolding to this faithful fellow the change in his master's fortune, and willing to enjoy his first surprise, desired to be conducted to the room where he was lodged without further ceremony. He found honest Neptune with his arm in a sling, a pipe in his mouth, and a can of grog on the table. "I am come to you, my friend," —began Fitzallen assuming great gravity—" with a message from *lord Westmere*, who begs you to be assured that business, only, of the utmost importance could so long have prevented his enquiries about you. Not half an hour ago he was unacquainted with your situation, and is now anxiously waiting to see his faithful servant well housed and provided for, that nothing might be

wanting to complete his present happiness."

Grappling, who from the beginning of this address had withdrawn the pipe from his mouth, now laid it on the table, and eyeing the lieutenant askaunce, thus replied: "Thof I am not acquainted with you, brother, yet I must make bold to tell you, notwithstanding your red coat, that Joe Grappling knows a hawk from a hand-saw as the saying is, still; and howbeit that his timbers be a little gone to decay, and this here last smash in the larboard arm has done a little towards crippling the vessel, yet he can steer by the compass of his wits nevertheless; and whoever says to the contrary tells a damn'd lie, d'ye see!"—"And must I," replied the lieutenant, hardly able to keep his countenance, "carry this reply back to his lordship?" "Aye," returned Neptune, "and her ladyship, too, if you like, friend, and so sheer off." "And

so you really," continued Fitzallen, "would have me be the messenger of your desertion from Mr. Ralph Reybridge?"—"Mr. who?" exclaimed the tar, dashing the pipe which he had resumed, from his mouth. "Avast heaving! Do you come from young Mr. Reybridge, brother?" The lieutenant now took the old sailor cordially by the hand, and explained to him in as few words as he could, his master's splendid exaltation in life; that the first message he had delivered was literally correct, and that a coach was then waiting at the door to take them both back to Grosvenor-square. "Well, Sir," cried Grappling, after his first joyful surprise was somewhat abated, "I must confess as how these be blessed tidings indeed! and I bless God and you, Sir, thatha' brought um!"—Then, after a pause, and brushing the tear of gladness from his eye—"and did he, then, Sir, for certain, think of old Joe,

though promoted to a *flag* ship, and hoisting a lord's penant at his main-top-gallant mast head?"—"He did indeed"—replied the lieutenant. "Well, then, shiver my jib," returned Neptune—"If I care how soon I go down!"—This said, he gave three or four capers about the room, and the surgeon coming in at the same time, Fitzallen explained every thing necessary respecting his patient, or more properly speaking at this time, his impatient,—and then taking Grappling familiarly by the arm, they walked together to the coach. Our hero received his old shipmate with his wonted cordiality, and then introduced him to the earl as the brave seaman who had so gallantly assisted him in preserving his adored Louisa from the villanous Sir Frederick Lorimer. His lordship immediately took him by the hand, and vowed that he and his children should never want a friend; whilst the lovely bride elect beamed upon him a

glance that even the enamoured Ralph himself might have envied him.

The old sailor was by no means in a condition to support such an accumulation of honour and happiness, and which would have infallibly turned his brain, if Fitzallen had not led him out of the room, and handed him over to the servants, to whom he was formally introduced by Mr. Rowlands, the butler, in the servant's hall, and received with every demonstration of joy and respect. After swallowing a mug of beer, the worthy tar thanked his fellow servants for their civility, and then Mr. Rowlands was deputed by the rest to inform him of all the wonderful particulars relating to their dear REAL young lord, from Mrs. Reybridge's first adventure of the robbers, to lieutenant Fitzallen's discovery to the earl. The old butler began, accordingly; but had scarcely proceeded in his account five minutes, when the blood forsook Grappling's cheeks, his

his eyes closed and he would have fallen from the bench on which he was sitting, had not Mrs. Cook, who was of the Amazonian breed, caught him in her arms. The first use he made of his returning senses, was to rub his eyes:—then skipping over three or four chairs that impeded his progress, he ran up stairs, bounded into the drawing-room, maugering the presence of two or three lords and countesses that were paying a congratulatory visit,—rushed forward, and falling on his knees before his young master and grasping his hand,—" 'twas I! —I," faltered he—" That grappled thee from the villain that would have killed thee! These hands conveyed thee to old Andrew the coachman! I am the very *jumping Joseph* he mentions,—and I bless the great Commander of All that thou art the precious babe I saved!"

The whole company were greatly affected by this unexpected and interest-

ing declaration. As for our hero, he waved, at this important moment, all his newly acquired distinctions, and taking his preserver in his arms embraced him with all the warmth of grateful surprise. Lord Ardendale, Fitzallen, and the excellent Mr. Denham equally expressed their joyful approbation, whilst poor Joe was, a second time, on the verge of sinking under his excess of happiness, and could only ultimately gaze on Ralph, and mutter prayers and thanksgivings to the great Providence, "that sits up aloft."

Our honest seaman, indeed, had never been intended for a son of the ocean; but fate ordered it otherwise, and at the age of thirty, being sick of rising with the lark to follow the plough, he took a French leave of his father, who was a farmer of some property at a small village near the town of Oswestry in Shropshire, and together with two or three other young fellows of the same

mind, set out for the metropolis in order to get into more active employment. It was on this very expedition that our young adventurer and his comrades were stopped by old Andrew the coachman. Joey the Jumper had been the first to pursue the two ruffians in the manner we have already related, and having safely deposited the infant and picture into the coachman's arms, returned instantly to the scene of action; but the disabled villain had recovered himself in the interval, and effected his escape. Joe's comrades soon after joining him with no better success, they hastened back to the carriage, but were very much surprised and disappointed to find it gone, as being strangers to the country, none of them could even guess to whom it belonged. Wild and thoughtless, and fearful of the pursuit of their friends at Oswestry, they did not even venture to lay the affair before a magistrate, lest the result might have

subjected them to a detention at Shrewsbury, and have thwarted their favourite scheme: they proceeded therefore on their journey to London, without mentioning the matter to a single soul. Here they separated, and honest Joseph, whose vigour of mind and body but ill qualified him for the servile drudgery of a side-board, was glad to unite his fate with some merry lads at Wapping, and was shortly after entered a forecastle man on board the Lion man of war. In this situation his bravery, activity and general good conduct gained him the constant commendation of his officers, and the love of his shipmates. A good haul of prize money induced him to quit a life of celibacy, and he struck his bachelor's colours to a butcher's widow at Plymouth, by whom, in the course of a few years, he had three children. When Ralph and he first became acquainted, he had engaged himself to go a voyage to India under the command of the

worthy captain Daventry, to avoid being pressed into the service of a tyrant, under whose lash he had long suffered, and whom he could, neither with zeal nor common patience, obey. The rest of his story need not be repeated. His youth had been devoted to danger and incessant fatigue; the pillow of his old age was to be soothed by the hand of an indulgent and beloved master, and his children were destined to become happy in themselves, serviceable to their country, and a blessing to their father.

For several weeks after these important transactions, nothing else was to be heard of in the circles of fashion.

The union was, soon after, celebrated. Louisa no longer shrunk from a public marriage; her heart had long before been wedded to her beloved lord, and she would have breathed her vows to him of eternal love and constancy before thousands and ten thousands!—They were united in St. James's church

by the Bishop of D——, to whom, on this occasion, Mr. Denham insisted upon resigning the sacred duty, and the wedding was honoured by the presence of some of the most distinguished families in London. On the return of the happy couple to Grosvenor-square, the enraptured earl sent for the old lieutenant, the cause, under Providence, of all this unlooked for happiness, and thus addressed him, while tears of gratitude glistened in his eyes. "My excellent and ever esteemed friend, by whose integrity, circumspection, and zeal, I have been rescued from the gulf of destruction, and put in possession of the first of earthly enjoyments, in the contemplation of my dear children's happiness, and the bright prospect of my lineal honours descending to posterity dignified by every charm that virtue and beauty can jointly bestow, in what way can I evince my gratitude?" Fitzallen was about to reply, but the earl inter-

rupted him. "Hear me, Fitzallen; and, as you would not rob me of any portion of the happiness you have showered upon me, start no objections to what I have done, past recal. Your regiment has been long reduced, I find; but I have been commanded by his majesty to deliver to you a captain's commission in the — foot and to impart to you his further promise of immediate promotion in one now serving in Ireland, your native country." Fitzallen thought of his wife and children, and pressed his lordship's hand. "Yet more;" continued the earl. "The Iversfield estate is no longer mine. Yesterday I signed the deed that binds it to you and your heirs for ever!" "My lord, my lord," interrupted the lieutenant, overwhelmed with confusion,—"this is too much! this must not be!—I can never consent." "My friend," resumed the earl, "our families must never, hereafter, be separated. This is an arrangement which

not only binds you to us, but it is one which has met with the joyful concurrence of *our dear children!*" Fitzallen was unspeakably affected by this tender proof of lord Ardendale's grateful esteem. For some moments he could only look towards heaven!—The idea of his being suddenly invested with rank and fortune,—The retrospection of his past sufferings, and the anticipation of the future honourable establishment of himself and those most dear to him;—of his boys in particular, to whom he should now be able to give educations suited to their inclinations and capacities; these considerations took from him, for some moments, the power of utterance; at length he lifted his benefactor's hand respectfully to his lips—"my lord"—said he with a faltering voice, "you have commanded, and it is my duty to obey. May that Being, who only can, reward, as it deserves to be rewarded, your exalted beneficence!"

Soon after their introduction at court, lord and lady Westmere accompanied the earl into Northamptonshire, and the venerable Denham, unable to live out of their society, was happy to resign his living at P—n, and resume his former functions as chaplain. Rothwell Castle once more resumed its primitive simplicity. The gentle virtues went hand in hand with religion, and the happy tenants once more rejoiced in the joy of their lord.

The houses of Leybrook and Ardendale being thus united, we shall wind up by a brief account of what followed this memorable event.

The worthy major Penrose returned from India five years after, with the rank of a lieutenant colonel, and his joy at his young friend's metamorphosis need not be mentioned, nor the heartfelt satisfaction with which he was received at the castle. The widow Sefton and her children had long been relieved from

their dependent situation by the colonel's bounty, who having purchased a comfortable estate in Northamptonshire because he would be near his noble friends, found little difficulty in persuading this beloved sister to reside with him.

The Fitzallens, too, though so comfortably established at Iversfield, never felt so happy as in the society of their benefactors, and their visits to Rothwell-castle were generally annual. The old lieutenant was now become a lieutenant-colonel, but his constitution was too visibly impaired to allow him to recommence the active duties of a soldier's life, and he devoted the remainder of his days to the peaceful, but not less essential offices of the husband, father, and friend.

The old Marquis of Carringsfort died three years after the marriage of his injured niece's son, and was succeeded by a man as generous and just, as *he* had been selfish, unfeeling, and revengeful.

The consequence was a speedy and joyful reconciliation of the two noble families. Although no doubt had been entertained of the truth of honest Grappling's assertion, yet the old tar was not satisfied till he had summoned two or three friends and relations from Oswestry to attest his identity. This ceremony being over, he consented to retire with his little family to a small farm contiguous to Rothwell-castle, and lived to see his children all amply and respectably provided for by his dear young master.

Old Mr. Vapourley had no cause to repent of the forgiveness extended to his son, who, struck by the example of our hero, resolutely shook off the returning temptations to vice and folly, and became an agreeable and even useful member of society. The wretched impostor, Rushden, stood his trial at the Old Bailey for the wilful murder of

Alexander Valpine (alias Wincroft) and was fully convicted on the testimony of the ruffian who had been admitted an evidence for the crown.

As lawless ambition had first prompted this miserable man to utter impious threats against the authors of his being, so now false pride divested him of all confidence in religion, and he preferred suicide, and the risque of perdition in the next world, to a temporary degradation in this. The remains of Valpine were attended to the grave by Fitzallen and Mr. Denham, which latter, after he had delivered over them with more than his usual solemnity the burial service, breathed a fervent ejaculation to Heaven that the repentance and atonement of the wretched sinner, though late, might be finally accepted at the Throne of Mercy!

This venerable and pious man lived to christen three of his delighted pu-

pil's children, and then died in his arms "full of age and honour" and was buried, at his own request, by the side of his earliest friend and patron, the late lord Ardendale.

THE END.

W. Flint, Printer, Old Bailey, London.